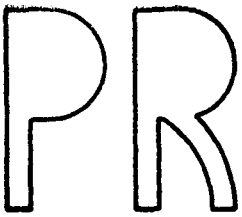

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Hannah Arendt

THE CRISIS IN EDUCATION*

I am not a professional educator and so I shall be speaking to you on a subject about which, in the specialist's sense, I know nothing. What interests me in the question of education is the fact that, in America at least, it has become a political problem of the first magnitude, reported on almost daily in the newspapers. I shall therefore be speaking from a background of experience that in many respects is sure to be unfamiliar to you; it is not my intention to go into it in detail. I can count on your being aware of one thing, however—the fact of the crisis itself. For the crisis in education, which as it happens can be best observed in America, is really just one aspect of the general crisis that has overtaken the modern world everywhere and in almost every sphere of life. Naturally this crisis manifests itself differently in each country, involving different areas and taking on different forms. There is always a temptation to believe that we are dealing with a specific problem confined within historical and national boundaries and of importance only to those immediately affected. It is precisely this belief that in our time has consistently proved false. One can take it as a general rule in this century that whatever is possible and true in one country may in the foreseeable future be equally possible and true in almost any other.

Aside from these obvious reasons that would make it seem advisable for modern man to keep the thank-God-that's-not-how-we-are to a minimum, there is another less obvious but not less cogent reason for his concerning himself with a critical situation in which he is not immediately involved. And that is the opportunity, provided by the

* A lecture delivered at Bremen, May 13, 1958.

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very fact of crisis—which tears away façades and obliterates prejudices—to explore and inquire into whatever has been laid bare of the essence of the matter. The disappearance of prejudices simply means that we have lost the answers on which we ordinarily rely without even realizing they were originally answers to questions. A crisis forces us back to the questions themselves and requires from us either new or old answers, but in any case direct judgments. A crisis only becomes a disaster when we respond to it with preformed judgments, that is, with prejudices. Such an attitude not only sharpens the crisis but makes us forfeit the experience of reality and the opportunity for reflection it provides.

However clearly a general problem may present itself in a crisis, it is nevertheless impossible ever to isolate completely the universal element from the concrete and specific circumstances in which it makes its appearance. Though the crisis in education may affect the whole world it is characteristic that we find its most extreme form in America, the reason being that perhaps only in America could a crisis in education actually become a factor in politics. In America, as a matter of fact, education plays a different and, politically, incomparably more important role than in other countries. Technically, of course, the explanation lies in the fact that America has always been a land of immigrants; it is obvious that the enormously difficult melting together of the most diverse racial groups—never fully successful but continuously succeeding beyond expectation—can only be accomplished through the schooling, education and Americanization of the immigrants' children. Since for most of these children English is not their mother tongue but has to be learned in school, schools must obviously assume functions which in a nation-state would be performed as a matter of course in the home.

More decisive, however, for our considerations is the role that continuous immigration plays in the country's political consciousness and frame of mind. For America is not simply a colonial country in need of immigrants to populate the land though independent of them in its political structure. For America the determining factor has always been the motto printed on every dollar bill: *Novus Ordo Seclorum,* The New Order of the World. The immigrants, the newcomers, are a guarantee to the country that it represents the new order. The meaning of this new order, this founding of a new world

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against the old, was and is the doing away with poverty and slavery. But at the same time its magnificence consists in the fact that from the beginning this new order did not shut itself off from the outside world—as has elsewhere been the custom in the founding of Utopias—in order to confront it with a perfect model, nor was its purpose to enforce imperial claims or to be preached as an evangel to others. Rather its relation to the outside world has been characterized from the start by the fact that this republic, which planned to abolish poverty and slavery, welcomed all the poor and enslaved of the earth. In the words spoken by John Adams in 1765—that is, before the Declaration of Independence—"I always consider the settlement of America as the opening of a grand scheme and design in Providence for the illumination and emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth." This is the basic intent or the basic law in accordance with which America began her historical and political existence.

The extraordinary enthusiasm for what is new, which is shown in almost every aspect of American daily life, would presumably have resulted in any case in greater attention being paid and greater significance being ascribed to the newcomers by birth, that is, the children and young people, whom the Greeks simply called the *neoi*. There is the additional fact, however, a fact that has become decisive for the meaning of education, that this pathos of the new, though it antedates the eighteenth century, only developed conceptually and politically in that century. From this source there was derived at the start an educational ideal, tinged with Rousseauism and in fact directly influenced by Rousseau, in which education became an instrument of politics, and political activity itself was conceived of as a form of education.

The role played by education in all political utopias from ancient times onward shows how natural it is to start a new world with those who are by birth and nature new. So far as politics is concerned, this involves of course a serious misconception: instead of joining with one's equals in assuming the effort of persuasion and running the risk of failure, there is dictatorial intervention, based upon the absolute superiority of the adult, and the attempt to produce the new as a *fait accompli*, that is, as though the new already existed. For this reason in Europe, too, the belief that one must begin

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with the children if one wishes to produce new conditions has remained principally the monopoly of revolutionary movements of tyrannical cast which, when they came to power, took the children away from their parents and simply indoctrinated them. Education can play no part in politics, because in politics we always have to deal with those who are already educated. Whoever wants to educate adults really wants to act as their guardian and prevent them from political activity. Since one cannot educate adults, the word education has an evil sound in politics; there is a pretense of education when the real purpose is coercion without the use of force. He who seriously wants to create a new political order through education, that is, neither through force and constraint nor through persuasion, must draw the dreadful Platonic conclusion: the banishment of all older people from the state that is to be founded. But even the children one wishes to educate to be citizens of a utopian morrow are actually denied their own future role in the body politic. By preparing them for something new one actually strikes from the newcomers' hands their own chance at the new.

All this is by no means the case in America, and it is exactly this fact that makes it so hard to judge these questions correctly there. The political role that education actually plays in a land of immigrants, the fact that the schools not only serve to Americanize the children but affect their parents as well, that here in fact one sheds an old world and enters into a new one, encourages the illusion that a new world is being built through the education of the children. Of course the true situation is not this at all. The world into which children are introduced, even in America, is an old world, that is, a pre-existing world, constructed by the living and the dead, and it is only new for those who have newly entered it either by birth or immigration. But here illusion is stronger than reality because it springs directly from a basic American experience, the experience that a new world can be founded, and what is more, founded with full consciousness of a historical continuum, for the phrase "New World" gains its meaning from the old world which however admirable on other scores was rejected because it could find no solution for poverty and slavery.

How disastrously the consequences of this illusion can make themselves felt in the field of politics was demonstrated quite recently

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by the events in the southern states in connection with the Negro problem. The administration in Washington intervened there, recognizing correctly that the situation was not only intolerable but unconstitutional. But what form did the intervention take? In order to create a radical change—that is, a wholly new order of things—it began with the children in the schools. All those participating in this procedure were swayed consciously or unconsciously by the old Rousseauian conception that a new world could be founded by erecting it like a miniature model in the world of children, that is, in the school, and hoping that it would then go on developing naturally and automatically like the children themselves. The plan of course did not work because the administration had neither the intention nor the means of taking the children away from their parents or of terrorizing or indoctrinating anybody. Since it has failed in its attempt to persuade the adults, it has confronted the children, without of course realizing what it was doing, with a problem that the adults are incapable of solving.

Now in respect to education itself the illusion arising from the pathos of the new has had considerably more serious consequences in our own century. It has first of all made it possible for that complex of modern educational theories, which originated in Middle Europe and consists of an astounding hodgepodge of sense and nonsense, to accomplish, under the banner of progressive education, a most radical revolution in the whole system of education. What in Europe has remained an experiment, tested out here and there in single schools and isolated educational institutions and then gradually extending its influence in certain quarters, in America about twenty-five years ago completely overthrew, as though from one day to the next, all traditions and all the established methods of teaching and learning.[1] I shall not go into details. The significant fact is that for the sake of certain theories, good or bad, all the rules of sound human reason were thrust aside. Such a procedure is always of great and pernicious significance, especially in a country that relies so extensively on common sense in its political life. Whenever in political questions sound human reason fails or gives up the attempt to supply answers we are faced by a crisis; for this kind of reason is really that

1. Here and in the following, I leave out of account all private schools and especially the Catholic parochial schools.

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common sense by virtue of which we and our five individual senses are fitted into a single world common to us all and by the aid of which we move about in it. The disappearance of common sense in the present day is the surest sign of the present-day crisis. In every crisis a piece of the world, something common to us all, is destroyed. The failure of common sense, like a divining rod, points to the place where such a cave-in has occurred.

In any case the answer to the question of why Johnny can't read (as the title of a well-known best seller has it) or to the more general question of why the scholastic standards of the average American school lag so very far behind the average standards in actually all the countries of Europe is not, unfortunately, simply that this country is young and has not yet caught up with the standards of the old world but, on the contrary, that this country in this particular field is the most "advanced" and most modern in the world. And this is true in a double sense: nowhere have the educational problems of a mass society become so acute and nowhere else have the most modern theories in the realm of pedagogy been so uncritically and slavishly accepted. Thus the crisis in American education announces, on the one hand, the bankruptcy of progressive education and, on the other, presents a problem of immense difficulty because it has arisen under the conditions and in response to the demands of a mass society.

In this connection we must bear in mind another more general factor which did not, to be sure, cause the crisis but which has aggravated it to a remarkable degree. You know of course that the concept of equality plays and always has played a unique role in American life. Much more is involved in this than equality before the law, more too than the leveling of class distinctions, more even than what is expressed in the phrase "equality of opportunity," though that has a greater significance in this connection because in the American view a right to education is one of the inalienable civic rights. This last has been decisive for the structure of the school system in that "higher schools" in the European sense exist only as exceptions. Since compulsory school attendance extends to the age of sixteen every child must enter high school, and the high school therefore is basically a kind of continuation of primary school. As a result of this lack of a "higher school" the preparation for the college course

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has to be supplied by the colleges themselves, whose curricula therefore suffer from a chronic overload, which in turn affects the quality of the work done there.

At first glance one might perhaps think that this anomaly lies in the very nature of a mass society in which education is no longer a privilege of the wealthy classes. A glance at England, where, as everyone knows, secondary education has also been made available in recent years to all classes of the population, will show that this is not the case. For there at the end of primary school, at the age of eleven, they have instituted the dreaded examination that weeds out all but some ten per cent of the scholars suited for higher education. The rigor of this selection was not accepted even in England without protest; in America it would have been simply impossible. What is aimed at in England is clearly once more the establishment of an oligarchy, this time not of wealth or of birth but of talent. But this means, even though people in England may not be altogether clear about it, that the country even under a socialist government will continue to be governed as it has from time out of mind—that is, neither as a monarchy nor as a democracy but as an oligarchy or aristocracy —the latter in case one takes the view that the most gifted are also the best, which is by no means a certainty. In America such an almost mechanical division of the children into gifted and ungifted would be considered intolerable. It contradicts the principle of equality, of equalitarian democracy.

Thus what makes the educational crisis in America so especially acute is the political temper of the country which of itself struggles to equalize or to erase as far as possible the difference between young and old, between the gifted and the ungifted, finally between children and adults, particularly between pupils and teachers. It is obvious that such an equalization can actually be accomplished only at the cost of the teacher's authority and at the expense of the gifted among the students. However it is equally obvious, at least to anyone who has ever come in contact with the American educational system, that this difficulty, rooted in the political attitude of the country, also has great advantages, not simply of a human kind but educationally speaking as well; in any case these general factors cannot explain the crisis in which we presently find ourselves nor justify the measures through which that crisis has been precipitated.

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II

These ruinous measures can be schematically traced back to three basic assumptions with which, in themselves, you are all familiar. The *first* is that the child's world or the society that children form among themselves is independent by nature and must in so far as possible be left to them to govern. Adults are only there to help with this government. The authority that tells the individual child what to do and what not to do rests with the child group itself—and this produces, among other consequences, a situation in which the adult stands helpless before the individual child and out of contact with him. He can only tell him to do what he likes and then prevent the worst from happening. The real and normal relations between children and adults, arising from the fact that people of all ages are always simultaneously together in the world, are thus broken off. And so it is of the essence of this first basic assumption that it takes into account only the group and not the individual child.

As for the child in the group, he is of course rather worse off than before. For the authority of a group, even a child group, is always considerably stronger and more tyrannical than the severest authority of an individual person can ever be. If one looks at it from the standpoint of the individual child, his chances to rebel or to do anything on his own hook are practically nil; he no longer finds himself in a very unequal contest with a person who has, to be sure, absolute superiority over him but in contest with whom he can nevertheless count on the solidarity of other children, that is, of his own kind; rather he is in the position, hopeless by definition, of a minority of one confronted by the absolute majority of all the others. There are very few grown people who can endure such a situation, even when it is not supported by external means of compulsion; children are simply and utterly incapable of it.

Therefore by being emancipated from the authority of adults the child has not been freed but has been subjected to a much more terrifying and truly tyrannical authority, the tyranny of the majority. In any case the result is that the children have been so to speak banished from the world of grown-ups. They are either thrown back upon themselves or handed over to the tyranny of their own group, against which, because of its numerical superiority, they cannot rebel, with which, because they are children, they cannot reason, and out

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of which they cannot flee to any other world because the world of adults is barred to them. The reaction of the children to this pressure tends to be either conformism or juvenile delinquency, and is frequently a mixture of both.

The *second* basic assumption, which has come into question in the present crisis, has to do with teaching. Under the influence of modern psychology and the tenets of Pragmatism, pedagogy has developed into a science of teaching in general in such a way as to be wholly emancipated from the actual material to be taught. A teacher, so it was thought, is a man who can simply teach anything; his training is in teaching—not in the mastery of any particular subject. This attitude, as we shall presently see, is naturally very closely connected with a basic assumption about learning. Moreover it has resulted in recent decades in a most serious neglect of the training of teachers in their own subject, especially in the so-called secondary schools. Since the teacher does not need to know his own subject, it not infrequently happens that he is just one hour ahead of his class in knowledge. This in turn means not only that the students are actually left to their own resources but that the most legitimate source of the teacher's authority as the person who, turn it whatever way one will, still knows more and can do more than oneself is no longer effective. Thus the non-authoritarian teacher, who would like to abstain from all methods of compulsion because he is able to rely on his own authority, can no longer exist.

But this pernicious role that pedagogy and the teachers' colleges are playing in the present crisis was only possible because of a modern theory about learning. This was, quite simply, the logical application of the *third* basic assumption in our context, an assumption which the modern world has held for centuries and which found its systematic conceptual expression in Pragmatism. This basic assumption, as you all know, is that you can only know and understand what you have done yourself, and its application to education is as primitive as it is obvious: to substitute, insofar as possible, doing for learning. The reason that no importance was attached to the teacher's mastering his own subject was the wish to compel him to the exercise of the continuous activity of learning so that he would not, as they said, pass on "dead knowledge" but, instead, would constantly demonstrate how it is produced. The conscious intention was not to teach

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knowledge but to inculcate a skill, as though school were an institution for learning a handicraft.

In this process special importance was attached to obliterating as far as possible the distinction between play and work—in favor of the former. Play was looked upon as the liveliest and most appropriate way for the child to behave in the world, as the only form of activity that evolves spontaneously from his existence as a child. Only what can be learned through play does justice to this liveliness. The child's characteristic activity, so it was thought, lies in play; learning in the old sense by forcing a child into an attitude of passivity compelled him to give up his own playful initiative.

The close connection between these two things—the substitution of doing for learning and of playing for working—is directly illustrated by the teaching of languages: the child is to learn by speaking, that is by doing, not by studying grammar and syntax; in other words he is to learn a foreign language in the same way that as an infant he learned his own language: as though at play and in the uninterrupted continuity of simple existence. Quite apart from the question of whether this is possible or not—it is possible, to a limited degree, only when one can keep the child all day long in the foreign-speaking environment—it is perfectly clear that this procedure consciously attempts to keep the older child as far as possible at the infant level. The very thing that should prepare the child for the world of adults, the gradually acquired habit of work and of not-playing, is done away with in favor of the independence of the world of childhood.

Whatever may be the connection between doing and knowing or whatever the validity of the Pragmatic formula, its application to education, that is, to the way the child learns, tends to make absolute the world of childhood in just the same way that we noted in the case of the first basic assumption. Here, too, under the pretext of respecting the child's independence, he is debarred from the world of grownups and artificially kept in his own, so far as that can be called a world. This holding back of the child is artificial because it breaks off the natural relationship between grownups and children, which consists among other things in teaching and learning, and because at the same time it belies the fact that the child is a developing human being, that childhood is a temporary stage, a preparation for adulthood.

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The present crisis in America results from the recognition of the destructiveness of these basic assumptions and a desperate attempt to reform the entire educational system, that is, to transform it completely. In doing this what is actually being attempted—except for the plans for an immense increase in the facilities for training in the physical sciences and in technology—is nothing but restoration: teaching will once more be conducted with authority; play is to stop in school hours and serious work is once more to be done; finally there is even talk of transforming the present curricula for teachers so that the teachers themselves will have to learn something before being turned loose on the children.

These proposed reforms, which are still in the discussion stage and are of purely American interest, need not concern us here. What is of importance to our argument is a twofold question. Which aspects of the modern world and its crisis have actually revealed themselves in the educational crisis, that is, what are the true reasons that for decades things could be said and done in such glaring contradiction to sound human reason? And, secondly, what can we learn from this crisis for the conduct of education—not in the sense that one can always learn from mistakes what ought not to be done, but rather by reflecting on the role that education plays in every civilization, that is on the obligation that the existence of children entails for every human society. We shall begin with the second question.

III

A crisis in education would at any time give rise to serious concern even if it did not reflect, as in the present instance it does, a more general crisis and instability in modern society. For education belongs among the most elementary and necessary activities of human society, which never remains as it is but continuously renews itself through birth, through the arrival of new human beings. These newcomers, moreover, are not finished but in a state of becoming. Thus the child, the subject of education, has for the educator a double aspect: he is new in a world that is strange to him and he is in process of becoming, he is a new human being and he is a becoming human being. This double aspect is by no means self-evident and it does not apply to the animal forms of life; it corresponds to a double relationship, the relationship to the world on the one hand

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and to life on the other. The child shares the state of becoming with all living things; in respect to life and its development, the child is a human being in process of becoming just as a kitten is a cat in process of becoming. But the child is new only in relation to a world that was there before him, that will continue after his death and in which he is to spend his life. If the child were not a newcomer in this human world but simply a not yet finished living creature, education would be just a function of life and would need to consist in nothing save that concern for the sustenance of life and that training and practice in living that all animals assume in respect to their young.

Human parents, however, have not only summoned their children into life through conception and birth, they have simultaneously introduced them into a world. In education they assume responsibility for both, for the life and development of the child and for the continuance of the world. These two responsibilities do not by any means coincide, they may indeed come into conflict with each other. The responsibility for the development of the child is in a certain sense a responsibility against the world: the child requires special protection and care so that nothing destructive may happen to him from the world. But the world, too, needs protection to keep it from being overrun and destroyed by the onslaught of the new that bursts upon it with each new generation.

Because the child must be protected against the world, his traditional place is in the family which daily welcomes him back from the outside world into the security of private life within four walls. These four walls, within which people's private family life is lived, constitute a shield against the world and specifically against the public aspect of the world. They enclose a secure place, without which no living thing can thrive. This holds good not only for the life of childhood but for human life in general. Wherever the latter is consistently exposed to the world without the protection of privacy and security its vital quality is destroyed. In the public world, common to all, persons count and so does work, that is, the work of our hands that each of us contributes to our common world; but life qua life does not matter there. The world cannot be regardful of it, and it has to be hidden and protected from the world.

Everything that lives, not vegetative life alone, emerges from

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darkness and, however strong its natural tendency to thrust itself into the light, it nevertheless needs the security of darkness to grow at all. This may indeed be the reason that children of famous parents so often turn out badly. Fame penetrates the four walls, invades their private space, bringing with it, especially in present-day conditions, the merciless glare of the public realm, which floods everything in the private lives of those concerned, so that the children no longer have a place of security where they can grow. But exactly the same destruction of the real living space occurs wherever the attempt is made to turn the children themselves into a kind of world. Among the children there then arises public life of a sort and, quite apart from the fact that it is not a real one and that the whole attempt is a sort of fraud, the damaging fact remains that children—that is, human beings in process of becoming but not yet complete—are thereby forced to expose themselves to the light of a public existence.

That modern education, insofar as it attempts to establish a world of children, destroys the necessary conditions for vital development and growth seems obvious. But that such harm to the developing child should be the result of modern education strikes one as strange indeed, for this education maintained that its exclusive aim was to serve the child and rebelled against the methods of the past because these had not sufficiently taken into account the child's inner nature and his needs. "The Century of the Child," as you will recall, was going to emancipate the child and free him from the standards derived from the adult world. Then how could it happen that the most elementary conditions of life necessary for the growth and development of the child were overlooked or simply not recognized? How could it happen that the child was exposed to what more than anything else characterized the adult world, its public aspect, after the decision had just been reached that the mistake in all past education had been to see the child as nothing but an undersized grownup?

The reason for this strange state of affairs has nothing directly to do with education; it is rather to be found in the judgments and prejudices about the nature of private and public life and their relation to each other which have been characteristic of modern society since the beginning of modern times and which educators, when they finally began, relatively late, to modernize education, accepted

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as self-evident assumptions without being aware of the consequences they must necessarily have for the life of the child. It is the peculiarity of modern society, and by no means a matter of course, that it regards life, that is, the earthly life of the individual as well as the family, as the highest good; and for this reason, in contrast to all previous centuries, emancipated this life and all the activities that have to do with its preservation and enrichment from the concealment of privacy and exposed them to the light of the public world. This is the real meaning of the emancipation of workers and women, not as persons, to be sure, but insofar as they fulfill a necessary function in the life process of society.

The last to be affected by this process of emancipation were the children, and the very thing that had meant a true liberation for the workers and the women—because they were not only workers and women but persons as well, who therefore had a claim on the public world, that is a right to see and be seen in it, to speak and be heard—was an abandonment and betrayal in the case of the children, who are still at the stage where the simple fact of life and growth outweighs the factor of personality. The more completely modern society discards the distinction between what is private and what is public, between what can only thrive in concealment and what needs to be shown to all in the full light of the public world, the more, that is, they introduce between the private and the public a social sphere in which the private is made public and vice versa, the harder they make it for their children, who by nature require the security of concealment in order to mature undisturbed.

However serious these infringements of the conditions for vital growth may be, it is certain that they were entirely unintentional; the central aim of all modern educational efforts has been the welfare of the child, a fact that is, of course, no less true even if the efforts made have not always succeeded in promoting the child's welfare in the way that was hoped. The situation is entirely different in the sphere of educational tasks no longer directed toward the child but toward the young person, the newcomer and stranger, who has been born into an already existing world which he does not know. These tasks are primarily, but not exclusively, the responsibility of the schools; they have to do with teaching and learning; the failure in this field is the most urgent problem in America today. What lies at the bottom of it?

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Normally the child is first introduced to the world in school. Now school is by no means the world and must not pretend to be; it is rather the institution that we interpose between the private domain of home and the world in order to make the transition from the family to the world possible at all. Attendance there is required not by the family but by the state, that is by the public world, and so in relation to the child school in a sense represents the world, although it is not yet actually the world. At this stage of education adults, to be sure, once more assume a responsibility for the child, but by now it is not so much responsibility for the vital welfare of a growing thing as for what we generally call the free development of characteristic qualities and talents. This, from the general and essential point of view, is the uniqueness that distinguishes every human being from every other, the quality by virtue of which he is not only a stranger in the world but something that has never been here before.

Insofar as the child is not yet acquainted with the world he must be gradually introduced to it; insofar as he is new, care must be taken that this new thing comes to fruition in relation to the world as it is. In any case, however, the educators here stand in relation to the young as representatives of a world for which they must assume responsibility although they themselves did not make it, and even though they may, secretly or openly, wish it were other than it is. This responsibility is not arbitrarily imposed upon educators; it is implicit in the fact that the young are introduced by adults into a continuously changing world. Anyone who refuses to assume joint responsibility for the world should not have children and must not be allowed to take part in educating them.

In education this responsibility for the world takes the form of authority. The authority of the educator and the qualifications of the teacher are not the same thing. Although a measure of qualification is indispensable for authority, the highest possible qualification can never by itself beget authority. The teacher's qualification consists in knowing the world and being able to instruct others about it, but his authority rests on his assumption of responsibility for that world. Vis-à-vis the child it is as though he were a representative of the parents, pointing out the details and saying to the child: This is our world.

Now we all know how things stand today in respect to authority. Whatever one's attitude toward this problem may be, it is obvious

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that in public and political life authority either plays no role at all—for the violence and terror exercised by the totalitarian countries has, of course, nothing to do with authority—or at most plays a highly contested role. This, however, simply means, in essence, that people do not wish to require of anyone or to entrust to anyone the assumption of responsibility for everything else, for wherever true authority existed it was joined with responsibility for the course of things in the world. If we remove authority from political and public life, it may mean that from now on an equal responsibility for the course of the world is to be required of everyone. But it may also mean that the claims of the world and the requirements of order in it are being consciously or unconsciously repudiated, all responsibility for the world is being rejected—the responsibility for giving orders no less than for obeying them. There is no doubt that in the modern loss of authority both intentions play a part and have often been simultaneously and inextricably at work together.

In education, on the contrary, there can be no such ambiguity in regard to the present-day loss of authority. Children cannot throw off educational authority, for that would mean they were playing the role of the oppressed—though even this absurdity of treating children as an oppressed minority in need of liberation has actually been tried out in modern educational practice. Authority has been discarded by the adults, and this can mean only one thing: that the adults refuse to assume responsibility for the world into which they have brought the children.

And yet there is of course a connection between the loss of authority in public and political life and in the private pre-political realms of the family and the school. The more radical the distrust of authority becomes in the public sphere, the greater the probability naturally becomes that the private sphere will not remain inviolate. There is this additional fact, and it is very likely the decisive one, that from time out of mind we have been accustomed in our tradition of political thought to regard the authority of parents over children, of teachers over pupils, as the model by which to understand political authority. It is just this model, which can be found as early as Plato and Aristotle, that makes the concept of authority in politics so extraordinarily ambiguous. It is based, first of all, on an absolute superiority such as can never exist among adults and which, from the point of view of human dignity, must never exist. In the second

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place, following the model of the nursery, it is based on a purely temporary superiority and therefore becomes self-contradictory if it is applied to relations that are not temporary by nature—like the relations of the rulers and the ruled. Thus it lies in the nature of the matter—that is, both in the nature of the present crisis in authority and in the nature of our traditional political thought—that the loss of authority which began in the political sphere should end in the private one; and it is naturally no accident that the place where political authority was first undermined, that is, in America, should be the place where the modern crisis in education makes itself most strongly felt.

The general loss of authority could, in fact, hardly find more radical expression than by its intrusion into the pre-political sphere, where authority seemed dictated by nature itself and independent of all historical changes and political conditions. On the other hand, modern man could find no clearer expression for his dissatisfaction with the world, for his disgust with things as they are, than by his refusal to assume, in respect to his children, responsibility for all this.

It is as though parents daily said: "In this world even we are not very securely at home; how to move about in it, what to know, what skills to master, are mysteries to us too. You must try to make out as best you can; in any case you are not entitled to call us to account. We are innocent, we wash our hands of you."

This attitude has, of course, nothing to do with that revolutionary desire for a new order in the world—*novus ordo seclorum*—which once animated America; it is rather a symptom of that modern estrangement from the world which can be seen everywhere but which presents itself in especially radical and desperate form under the conditions of a mass society. It is true that modern educational experiments, not in America alone, have struck very revolutionary poses, and this has, to a certain degree, increased the difficulty of clearly recognizing the situation, and caused a certain degree of confusion in the discussion of the problem; but, in contradiction to all such behavior stands the unquestionable fact that so long as America was really animated by that spirit she never dreamed of initiating the new order with education but, on the contrary, remained conservative in educational matters.

To avoid misunderstanding: it seems to me that conservatism, in the sense of conservation, is of the essence of the educational pro-

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cess, whose task is always to cherish and protect something—the child against the world, the world against the child, the new against the old, the old against the new. Even the comprehensive responsibility for the world that is thereby assumed implies, of course, a conservative attitude. But this, it seems to me, holds good only for the realm of education, or rather for the relations between grownups and children, and not for the realm of politics, where we act among and with adults and equals. In politics this conservative attitude—which accepts the world as it is, striving only to preserve the status quo—can only lead to destruction, because the world, in gross and in detail, is irrevocably delivered up to the ruin of time unless human beings are determined to intervene, to alter, to create what is new. Hamlet's words, "The time is out of joint. O cursed spite that ever I was born to set it right," are more or less true for every new generation, although since the beginning of our century they have perhaps acquired a more persuasive validity than before.

Basically we are always educating for a world that is or is becoming out of joint, for this is the basic human situation, in which the world is created by mortal hands to serve mortals for a limited time as home. Because the world is made by mortals it wears out; and because it continuously changes its inhabitants it runs the risk of becoming as mortal as they. To preserve the world against the mortality of its creators and inhabitants it must be constantly set right anew. The problem is simply to educate in such a way that a setting-right remains actually possible, even though it can, of course, never be assured. Our hope always hangs on the new which every generation brings; but precisely because we can base our hope only on this, we destroy everything if we so try to control the new that we, the old, can dictate how it will look. Exactly for the sake of what is new and revolutionary in every child, education must be conservative; it must preserve this newness and introduce it as a new thing into an old world, which, however revolutionary its actions may be, is always, from the standpoint of the next generation, superannuated and close to destruction.

IV

Now the real difficulty in modern education lies in the fact that despite all the fashionable talk about a new conservatism, even that

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minimum of conservation and the conserving attitude without which education is simply not possible is in our time extraordinarily hard to provide. There are very good reasons for this. The crisis of authority in education is most closely connected with the crisis of tradition, that is with the crisis in our attitude toward the realm of the past. This aspect of the modern crisis is especially hard for the educator to bear, because it is his task to mediate between the old and the new and he must therefore possess a clearly defined regard for the past. Through long centuries, i.e. throughout the combined period of Roman-Christian civilization, there was no need for him to become aware of this special quality in himself because a clearly defined regard for the past was an essential part of the Roman frame of mind, and this was not altered or ended by Christianity, but simply shifted onto different foundations.

It was of the essence of the Roman attitude (though this was by no means true of every civilization or even of the western tradition taken as a whole) to consider the past qua past as a model, ancestors, in every instance, as guiding examples for their descendants, to believe that all greatness lies in what has been, and therefore that the most fitting human age is old age, the man grown old, who, because he is already almost an ancestor may serve as a model for the living. All this stands in contradiction not only to our world and to the modern age from the Renaissance on, but, for example, to the Greek attitude toward life as well. When Goethe said that growing old is "the gradual withdrawal from the world of appearances," his was a comment made in the spirit of the Greeks, for whom being and appearing coincide. The Roman attitude would have been that precisely in growing old and slowly disappearing from the community of mortals man reaches his most characteristic form of being, even though, in respect to the world of appearances, he is in the process of disappearing; in any case he then approaches for the first time the existence in which he can begin to be an authority for others.

With the undisturbed background of such a tradition, in which education has a political function (and this was a unique case) it is in fact comparatively easy to do the right thing in matters of education without even pausing to consider what one is really doing, so completely is the specific ethos of the educational principle in accord with the basic ethical and moral convictions of society at large. To-

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day, however, we are no longer in that position; and it makes little sense to act as though we still were and had only, as it were, accidentally strayed from the right path and were free at any moment to find our way back to it. This means that wherever the crisis has occurred in the modern world, one cannot simply go on nor yet simply turn back. Such a reversal will never bring us anywhere except to the same situation out of which the crisis has just arisen. The return would simply be a repeat performance—though perhaps different in form, since there are no limits to the possibilities of nonsense and capricious notions that can be decked out as the last word in science. On the other hand, simple, unreflective perseverance, whether it be pressing forward in the crisis or adhering to the routine that blandly believes the crisis will not engulf its particular sphere of life, can only, because it surrenders to the course of time, lead to ruin; it can only, to be more precise, increase that estrangement from the world by which we are already threatened on all sides. Consideration of the principles of education must take into account this process of estrangement from the world; it can even admit that we are here presumably confronted by an automatic process, provided only that it does not forget that it lies within the power of human thought and action to interrupt and arrest such a process.

The problem of education in the modern world lies in the fact that by its very nature it cannot forego either authority or tradition, and yet must proceed in a world that is neither structured by authority nor held together by tradition. That means, however, that not just teachers and educators, but all of us, insofar as we live in one world together with our children and with young people, must take a radically different attitude toward them than we do toward one another. We must decisively divorce the realm of education from the others, most of all from the realm of public, political life, in order to derive from it alone a concept of authority and an attitude toward the past which are appropriate to it but have no general validity and must not claim a general validity in the world of grownups. In practice the first consequence of this would be a clear line drawn between children and adults; no attempt would be made to educate adults or to treat children as though they were adults. Where this line falls in each instance cannot be determined by a general rule; it changes often, in respect to age, from country to country, from

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one civilization to another, and also from individual to individual. Moreover, in our civilization we must be aware that professional training in universities or technical schools, though it always has something to do with education, is nevertheless in itself a kind of specialization. It no longer aims to introduce the young person to the world as a whole, but rather to a particular, limited segment of it. One cannot educate without at the same time teaching; an education without learning is empty and therefore degenerates with great ease into moral-emotional rhetoric. But one can quite easily teach without educating, and one can go on learning to the end of one's days without for that reason becoming educated. All these are particulars, however, that must really be left to the experts and the pedagogues.

What concerns us all and cannot therefore be turned over to the special science of pedagogy is the relation between grownups and children in general or, putting it in even more general and exact terms, our attitude toward the fact of nativity: the fact that we have all come into the world by being born and that this world is constantly renewed through birth. Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world.

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W. S. Merwin

FOUR POEMS

THE DRUNK IN THE FURNACE

For a good decade
The furnace stood in the naked gulley, fireless
And vacant as any hat. Then when it was
No more to them than a hulking black fossil
To erode unnoticed with the rest of the junk-hill
By the poisonous creek, and rapidly to be added
To their ignorance,

They were afterwards astonished
To confirm, one morning, a twist of smoke like a pale
Resurrection, staggering out of its chewed hole,
And to remark then other tokens that someone,
Cosily bolted behind the eye-holed iron
Door of the drafty burner, had there established
His bad castle.

Where he gets his spirits
It's a mystery. But the stuff keeps him musical:
Hammer-and-anvilling with poker and bottle
To his jugged bellowings, till the last groaning clang
As he collapses onto the rioting
Springs of a litter of car seats ranged on the grates
To sleep like an iron pig.

In their tar-paper church
On a text about stokeholes that are sated never
Their Reverend lingers. They nod and hate trespassers.

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When the furnace wakes, though, all afternoon
Their witless offspring flock like piped rats to its siren
Crescendo, and agape on the crumbling ridge
Stand in a row and learn.

GRANDMOTHER AND GRANDSON

As I hear it, now when there is company
Always the spindly granddam, stuck standing
In her corner like a lady clock long
Silent, out of some hole in the talk
Is apt to clack cup, clatter teeth, and with
Saucer gesturing to no one special,
Shake out her paper voice concerning
That pimply boy her last grandson: "Now who,
Who does he remind you of?"

(Who stuffs there
With cake his puffed face complected half
Of yellow crumbs, his tongue loving over
His damp hands to lick the sticky
From bitten fingers; chinless; all boneless but
His neck and nose; and who now rolls his knowing
Eyes to their attention.)

In vain, in vain,
One after the other, their lusterless
Suggestions of faint likenesses; she
Nods at none, her gaze absent and more
Absent, as though watching for someone through
A frosted window, until they are aware
She has forgotten her own question.

When he is alone, though, with only her
And her hazy eyes in the whole house

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To mind him, his way is to take himself
Just out of her small sight and there stay
Till she starts calling; let her call till she
Sounds in pain; and as though in pain, at last,
His answers, each farther, leading her
Down passages, up stairs, with her worry
Hard to swallow as a scarf-end, her pace
A spun child's in a blindfold, to the piled
Dust-coop, trunk- and junk-room at the top
Of all the stairs, where he hides till she sways
Clutching her breath in the very room, then
Behind her slips out, locking the door. His
Laughter down stair after stair she hears
Being forgotten. In the unwashed light,
Lost, she turns among the sheeted mounds
Fingering hems and murmuring, "Where, where
Does it remind me of?" Till someone comes.

ONE-EYE

(*In the country of the blind the one-eyed man is king.*)

On that vacant day
After kicking and moseying here and there
For some time, he lifted that carpet-corner
His one eyelid, and the dyed light
Leapt at him from all sides like dogs. Also hues
That he had never heard of, in that place
Were bleeding and playing.

Even so, it was
Only at the grazing of light fingers
Over his face, unannounced, and then his
Sight of many mat eyes, paired white
Irises like dried peas looking, that it dawned
On him: his sidelong idling had found
The country of the blind.

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Whose swarming digits
Knew him at once: their king, come to them
Out of a saying. And chanting an anthem
Unto his one eye, to the dry
Accompaniment that their leaping fingers made
Flicking round him like locusts in a cloud,
They took him home with them.

Their shapely city
Shines like a suit. On a plain chair he was set
In a cloak of hands, and crowned, to intricate
Music. They sent him their most soft
Daughters, clad only in scent and their own
Vast ears, meantime making different noises
In each antechamber.

They can be wakened
Sometimes by a feather falling on the next
Floor, and they keep time by the water-clocks'
Dropping even when they sleep. Once
He would expound to them all, from his only
Light, day breaking, the sky spiked and the
Earth amuck with color,

And they would listen,
Amazed at his royalty, gaping like
Sockets, and would agree, agree, blank
As pearls. At the beginning.
Alone in brightness, soon he spoke of it
In sleep only; "Look, look," he would call out
In the dark only.

Now in summer gaudy
With birds he says nothing; of their thefts, often
Beheld, and their beauties, now for a long time
Nothing. Nothing, day after day,
To see the black thumb as big as a valley
Over their heads descending silently
Out of a quiet sky.

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CATTULUS XI

Furius and Aurelius, bound to Catullus
Though he penetrate to the ends of the Indies
Where the eastern ocean crashing in echoes
    Pours up the shore,

Or into Hyrcania, soft Arabia,
Among Tartars or the archers of Parthia,
Or where the Nile current, seven times the same,
    Colors the waters,

Or through the beetling Alps, by steep passes, should come
To look on the monuments of great Caesar,
Gaul, the Rhine, and at the world's bitter end
    The gruesome Britons,

Friends, alike set to share or brave with me
Whatever the will of heaven may send,
To my mistress take these few sentiments,
    Put none too nicely:

Let her spread for her lechers and get her pleasure,
Lying wide to three hundred in one heat,
Loving none truly, but leaving them every one
    Wrung out and dropping;

But as for my love, let her not count on it
As once she could: by her own fault it died
As a flower at the edge of a field, which the plow
    Claws out in passing.

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Norman Mailer

ADVERTISEMENTS FOR MYSELF ON THE WAY OUT

Prologue to a Long Novel

1.

To be forced to admire what one instinctively hates, and to hate all which one would naturally love is the condition of our lives in these bad years, and so is the cause beneath other causes for our sickness and our death. If some of you will understand immediately what I mean, I still must think of the others who are to take the journey with me: that mob of readers whose experience of life is as narrow as it is poor, and worse if the truth be told—they are picking up this book because they have heard it is good for the bathroom and so may palliate their depression; this book! my tale of heroes and villains, murderers and suicide, orgy-masters, perverts, and passionate lovers, yes my lust to capture Time.

For those readers courage is required. My passion is to destroy innocence, and any of you who wish to hold to some part of that warm, almost fleshly tissue of lies, sentimentality, affectation and ignorance which the innocent consider love must be prepared instead for a dissection of the extreme, the obscene and the unsayable.

The mark of a philosopher is that he puts his name to his work, he wants his ideas to carry the connotation of the syllables (those primitive sounds) which make up the armature of his character. So, properly, I should introduce myself here, and indeed I would, if I were able, but my name eludes me and at present would slip by without meaning to you—I am virtually married to Time unless she has already divorced me (of which indigestible statement, more explanation later) and so my name alters as Time turns away from me, and it is not all that natural to explain who I am. Let it go. Only a dreary mind cannot bear mystery.

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Yet I do not know if I should evade your questions. The most murderous emotions are aroused when we cannot find the word to fit the particle, and murder (in favor of which I will find some arguments) still has the disadvantage of distracting the attention. Since I wish the various intelligences who take the trip with me to finish with stimulation to their brains and sweet for their bodies, I must necessarily take into account that the duller minds among you cannot support the luxury of listening to a voice without a face unless you are handed some first approximation to my state. I will therefore suggest it is possible I am a kind of ghost, the ghost of exhausted passion—but I prefer to believe this is completely untrue. How much less disagreeable to be some breath in the caverns of the unconscious of one of the figures in this unnatural mystery, or indeed to be the consciousness brought into being by the relations and mutilations of the exceptional characters I will introduce.

Only to say this is to deny it, for if I am the creature of relationship, I must be not so much consciousness as corporeal, containing a blastopore whose nucleic proteins limn a signature, the given first half of my destiny. Yes, I must be the breath of the present-present, a point of size swimming in my unglimpsed mother's first freshets of amniotic fluid, an embryonic two-cell, me, engaging no less than the fluid consciousness of a God, His comprehension still in mine, as I believe is true of all beings not yet born but budding in the belly. So I could be an embryo eight instants old, a work of gestation away from light and noise and pain, and yet knowing more than I will ever know again because I am part of Him. (Or is it Her?)

But to step without benefit of clergy onto the moot worms of theology is to lose our ground. The dock of our embarcation is the mystery of my eye and to whom or what it belongs: am I ghost, embryo, intellect, wind of the unconscious, or some part of Him or Her or Hem or Hir?—but there it is—Hem or Hir—a bona fide clue; only the Devil would ever boast of being thus intimate with the Divinity. So, through this work, at the best of times between us, when we are even laughing together, there should remain a reservation, a polite terror that the illumination is furnished by the Prince of Darkness, and the color of my light is satanic.

Of course, I could be as easily the old house in which the end

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of this story takes place (what resonances are contained in the studs, the joists, and the bowed floor planks of an old house). I could be a tree—there is a tree outside this house, an unusual maple whose bole divides into four trunks only a few hands from the ground, and whose branches in the leafless winter articulate the noble forms of the nerve paths of a brain as one might see them in the surgically drafted plates of one of those sturdy grisly nineteenth-century handbooks on medical practice. There is even a garden, a most delicate garden—we are near the sea—and the flowers in summer have that rare electric vivaciousness which comes from salt air, sandy soil, and fertilizer laced up over-rich with artificial nectar and mead. Flowers have always been sinister to me when they are lovely—they seem to share the elusive promise of a woman who is beautiful and whose voice is too perfect—one never knows if she is the avatar of a dream or some masterwork of treachery, she is so different from ourselves.

If I make such a comparison, it is obviously quite unnatural to me that I should share my existence with a flower, yet I advance the hypothesis in the interest of being comprehensive, and because the possibility is perversely appealing: where better could a demon hide himself than in the vulva of a garden bloom—if some pleasure-snatcher plucks the stem (have you ever heard *that* cry of pain?) the ex-flower can poison the house before it withers away. Yes, one does well to fear plants—once, out of an ill-timed overabundance of energy and boredom I kicked over a giant mushroom. It was five inches across the head, and I could have sworn it gave a venomous cry of rage as death came to it—"You bastard," I heard it say; such a vile fate for that exceptional mushroom, skull-like in its proportions and bold in size. I was sorry. Not every mushroom grows with such lust, and I had violated a process perhaps centuries in the chain. So from fear I mention the flower as well as the tree, and while whispering that vegetative life repels me more than not, I would add my bow to nature—I could be of the ocean and the sand dunes, that primal marriage of the little stones and the vast water—I could be of them, but I hope not; certain embraces are too monumental and so become dull. To say that the oceans of the world are but one tear of God's compassion is a metaphor so excruciatingly empty that the flatulence of a celibate must have been its first wind. But to believe

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that God like man can suffer occasionally from diarrhea is an infectious thought which stimulates all but the churchly and the vicious.

I will leave the oceans then, I will leave the flowers and the bees and the trees, reminding you that the extraordinary can hide in the meanest maggot, and will reduce myself as an interesting speculation to the dimensions of a dog. There is a hound in this book, brought to a climactic party we are soon to talk about, a poodle dog, Standard, pedigree, A.K.C., descended by his dam from a line of Westchester champions, his sire merely certified, and like all large poodles who have gained the attention due a rich pervert, he is an incredible dog. I know him so well that I cannot evade the last hypothesis—I could be that dog, for the vision of our life which is soon to disrupt your brain is in part a dog's view: a dog has no more than to meet another dog on the street, smell the hindquarters, and know whether friendship is possible, which well may be why dogs are invariably gloomy.

Enough. It would be unseductive to boast of how I will probably travel from the consciousness of one being to the emotions of another—a house, a tree, a dog, a cop, a cannibal all equal to my hunter's eye and promiscuous ear.

2.

There is a master pimp in our presence who is a candidate for the role of hero (his rivals for your vote, a television celebrity and a psychoanalyst) and for a time some years ago, this pimp, whose name is Marion Faye, dabbled at the edges of painting (giving for excuse the observation that such study might enrich his conception of the pornographic photography by which he then was making his living). Faye was a poor painter, but he had a love affair which went on for several weeks with the form of the spiral, and it was a matter of no mean significance to him that the valve of a snail shell as seen through his microscope (Zeiss, 2,000 Deutschmarks, oil immersion, binocular eyepiece) was a spiral galaxy of horny cells whose pigmentation had the deep orange of a twilight sun. Staring into the eye of the snail valve, he would wonder what heats of emotion had breathed into its red—he was of course on drugs at the time—and afterward, giving his marijuana-refreshed eyes to the whorls on the ball of his thumb and the tips of his fingers, he found the spiral

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again, and he had that thrill of fright so common to medieval alchemists, psychics, drug addicts, and perhaps available to a few of you: that exquisite terror of sensing oneself at the edge of secrets no other being has been brave enough to invade. For there it was: the tips of the fingers were for touch, as indeed was the snail valve (obliged to close at the lick of danger) and so for touch were all the other natural spirals he knew—he was by profession an accomplished familiar to the intricate double helix in the vaginal expansion, and the other holes of women, and for that matter, men; so he accepted the logic of his intuition: the natural spiral, wherever it appeared, was the mark for a complex of feeling, and if parts of the night sky disported in a spiral, there was sensation behind them, light years of space vibrating with sensuality and anguish, desiring . . .? But this was another question, too vast. Temporarily he gave up the investigation—in truth the form of his thought was also spiral: he would have to make that all but circular voyage through experience before he would come back to contemplate the spiral again.

Which perhaps is why I have chosen this way to introduce so active a man as a master pimp. If one is interested to begin to understand one's own life, the first of the useful axioms is that genius appears in all occupations, and as a pimp, Marion Faye was a genius. The proof is that he made a million dollars in a few years. Just how is a matter of such interest that it will later concern us in great detail, for one can explore such minutiae only by discovering the psychic anatomy of our republic.

Good. He was a millionaire, and still young, and he owned several houses in different parts of the country and one in Acapulco, and he had his private plane which he flew himself, and various cars, accoutrements, servants, jewelries, larders, and investments. Not to mention several going businesses and the two endowed lovers who attended him, man and woman. He had done this all in a few years, after coming out of prison without a penny, and he was of course not nearly satisfied, at least not at the moment I describe. Like all men who are Napoleonic in their ambitions and wide as the Renaissance in their talents, he had instincts about the nature of growth, a lover's sense of the moment of crisis, and he knew, perhaps as well as anyone alive, how costly is defeat when it is not soothed by greater consciousness, and how wasteful is the profit of

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victory when there is not the courage to employ it. So he knew the danger of inertia (if one does not grow, one must pay more for remaining the same), and for months there had been a decision he was unable to make: as had happened before, he felt his powers leaving him. His strength came from decision and action, he was religious (in a most special way to be sure), he was superstitious with the most sophisticated of superstitions, but as a practical matter he believed in the reality of Hell, and he had come to the point in his life, as he had foreseen in terror many a time, when the flux of his development, the discovery of the new beauties of his self-expression depended on murdering a man, a particular man, perhaps as exceptional as he, a man who could hardly fail to be aware that his own development, as opposed to Marion's, was also at an impasse which could be breached equally, if in the opposite direction, by the murder of Marion Faye who once had been his friend.

It was a problem, then, and one of no mean proportions. The tension to murder is as excruciating as the temptation to confess when on a torture rack. So long as one holds one's tongue the destruction of the body continues, the limbs and organs under question may be passing the last answer by which they can still recover, and if one is going to confess eventually it is wiser to do it soon, do it now, before the damage is irrevocable. So with the desire to murder. Each day we contain it a little of that murder is visited upon our own bodies, the ulcers seat themselves more firmly, the liver sickens, the lungs wither, the brain bursts the most artful of our mental circuits, the heart is sapped of stamina and the testicles of juice—who knows? this may be indeed the day when the first of the exploited cells takes that independent and mysterious flip from one life into another—from the social, purposive, impoverished, and unspeakably depressing daily life of an obedient cell, to the other life, wild-life, the life of the weed or hired gun, rebel cell growing by its own laws, highwayman upon the senses, in siege to the organs, rife with orgiastic speed, the call of the beat drumming its appeal to the millions of cells, for if other-life is short, it is wild as well, and without work. Yes, to hold murder too long is to lose the body, hasten that irreversible instant when the first cell leaps upon the habit of stale intelligence and gives itself as volunteer to the unformed cadres in the future legions of barbarian and bohemian.

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Of course, murder is never simple for old thieves. Old thieves have tired balls, and if Marion Faye often thought with distant pride that he was one of the few to have climbed beyond the killing precipice of manners, morals, the sense of sin and the fear of germs, he knew how much he had paid—yes, he had lost a part of his gift, he had drained the more extraordinary pleasures of his balls, dulled the finer knives of his brain, and left himself prey to such inertias of exhaustion as he was experiencing in these weeks before he sent out the invitation to the party in the old house at Provincetown, the party which was properly to come off in calculated murder.

3.

It is time now to say a little about this house and where it is situated. The peninsula of Cape Cod is perhaps eighty miles long, and bent in its middle like the knotty, no longer agreeable arm of an old man who once was strong. To the forearm and hand of this coast is given the name of The Upper Cape, and it is pleasant land if one's humor is mournful—wind-swept, with barren moors, lonely dunes, deserted ponds and stunted trees; its colors are gray and dun and the foliage is a dull green. Off the arterial highway with its savage excremental architecture of gas stations, chromium panelled diners, souvenir traps, fruit stands, motels, blinker lights, salt-eroded billboards, all in cruel vision-blunting pigments, in contrast to this arterial highway garish in its petrifactions of the over-extended American will, the side roads are quiet, hardly more than lanes, with small mouse-grey salt-box houses inhabited for the most part by retired Protestants, decent, lean, spare and stingy, grey themselves for the most part with a mouse grey.

There is no excess of life in the fall and winter, and it is country which can be recommended for the solitary—the lonely walks on sandy trails pass by cranberry bogs whose thorny undergrowth is violet in color against the lavender hues of the dunes when the sky is gray. Near Provincetown there are a few miles of empty sand between the bay and the ocean which have the sweep of the desert—the dunes rise into small hills and fall away to valleys where one could believe oneself lost in the Sahara—I have heard of people who wandered about in circles over one dune and down another, never reaching the ocean and never finding the bay, at least not for hours.

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There are few places on the eastern seaboard where one could bury a man as easily and leave one's chances so to nature, for the wind could leave the corpse under twenty feet of fill, or as easily could discover the cadaver before the cells were cold.

Beyond this desert, at the tip of the Cape, in the palm of the almost closed hand, is one of the last great fishing villages of the world, the place called Provincetown, in winter 3,000 population I suppose, its situation one of the most easterly promontories of the Atlantic coast. Three miles long and two streets wide, the town curls around the bay on the skin of the palm, a gaudy run with Mediterranean splashes of color, crowded steep-pitched roofs, fishing piers and fishing boats whose stench of mackerel and gasoline is as aphrodisiac to the sensuous nose as the clean bar-whisky smell of a night-club where call girls congregate.

It was in Provincetown the Puritans landed and held to a starving bivouac for three months before they broke the encampment and moved on to Plymouth Rock. They were without food and besides there was the spiral to wear them down: the Cape from the wrist to the fingers curls like a snail shell, the harbor an eye of water in the center, and one's sense of direction is forever confused. Without looking at the sun one could not point across the bay in the proper direction to Boston, Portugal, or the shores of Barbary. It is a place which defies one's nose for longitude and latitude, a cartographer's despair and a Puritan's as well. (The character of narrow intense faith is rectilinear in conception, which is why the clitorine cove in the facade of most New England churches is triangular or ice pick steeple in its form rather than obeying the feminine Catholic arch of almost equally narrow Gothic faiths.)

The house Marion purchased was on a sand dune behind the last hill overlooking the town, and it was isolated, especially in fall and winter, reached by a sandy road which dipped down one dune and up another to give a view of rolling furze, rain water ponds, and the ocean and beach of the back shore. In bad weather the wind was a phenomenon, a New England wind of the lost narrow faiths which slashed through open doors, tempted shutters loose from their catch and banged them through the night, vibrated every small pane in every Cape Cod window and came soughing out of the sky with the cries of storm water in its vaults—on such nights the hundred years

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of the house were alive with every murderous sleep it had ever suffered: it was the kind of house in which the dogs barked insanely in bad weather, and the nurse could not rest, and the baby awoke in hysterical terror at one in the morning while the mother would feel dread at the hundred rages of her husband restless beside her in marriage sleep, and the house shifted and swayed to the wind like a ship in North Atlantic seas, yes it seemed to contain every emotion which had died a frustrated death in its rooms and walls through a hundred New England winters, each ghost of emotion waiting to seize the storm feelings of the present; it was a house which had the capacity to set free, one upon the other, the dank sore-rotted assassins in the dungeons of a family's character. A storm at the wrong time came on with the horror that this was the night—and indeed there had been one killing there, an unexplained nineteenth-century crime, an old ship captain's widow who had worn a rectangular trough in the planks on the widow's walk at the ridgepole center of the steep roof. She was found dead on a late February night after three days of rain, the wind howling like a wounded shrew.

Now I know it is not in the mode of our pompous obliteration-haunted years to encourage such pathetic fallacies as the animism of the wind and an old house, but since (be I ghost, *geist,* demiurge, dog, bud, flower, tree, house, or some lost way-station of the divine, looking for my mooring in the labial tortures and languors of words) be I whatever, it must be evident that I am existentialist and would propose that when the wind carries a cry which is meaningful to human ears, it is simpler to believe the wind shares with us some part of the emotion of Being than that the mysteries of a hurricane's rising murmur reduce to no more than the random collision of insensate molecules. Yes, if I were to meet that saint with the body of an ox, St. Thomas Aquinas, a gentleman with whom I agree about very little, I would still be obliged to nod in obligation to his exceptional phrase, "the authority of the senses," exactly because I now feel the frustration of a wind which knows so much and can tell your ears so little. As our century moves toward its death, and the death of all of us, so our senses die first, and who has ears to hear the wind when the smoke of mutual hatred is thick on commuter trains, and the subway rails of an evening's television batter into stupidity the sense of the sensual, leaving us null and dumb to the almost ineffable

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sounds which touch beyond the vanity, the will, the force and the imprisonment of the ego, grim and God-murdering ego, champion of the practical, peasant divinity of the Reformation, that Faustian burgher who built our mills of steel on the stern, the palpable, and the self-evident notion that through a point only one line can be drawn parallel to a given line, when already we are travelling through the non-Euclidean present of space-time. Sooner than we think, lo, the line parallel to the given line will prove to be nothing other than the same line once around the route in the expanding spiral of Being.

And as yet I have said hardly a word about Time.

4.

But if through a given point, a line is drawn parallel to a given line, and proves to be nothing other than the same line, why then we have abstracted a first theorem on the nature of Time: that lines in parallel represent a function of the natural unwinding of Time (its onanistic tracings) when Time left to its own resources is excited into action neither by murder nor love, and so remains in step to the twitching of a clock. Such is passive Time, Time on its way to death; but Time as growth, Time as the excitations and chilling stimulations of murder, Time as the tropical envelopments of love (even if murder is lusty in the chest and love a cold sweat on the hip), Time is then the hard of a hoodlum or the bitch on her back looking for the lover whose rhythm will move her to the future.

But this conjunction is too soon complex and blurs the attention —let us leave it, let us fall away again to the cold palpable house of Marion Faye in the back sands of Provincetown, this sea-salted building which first gave me the thesis that houses are polar in their nature, tending to be boudoirs or churches. This purchase, if we are to agree in what we see, was a church of a house with an enormous two-story cathedral of a living room in dark over-stained walnut, the dining room, kitchen, pantry and servant quarters built into what had been the cellar, and the bedrooms, studies, studios, and sun rooms clustered like white-guanoed barnacles, cubicles of rooms all over the top and sides of this two-story chapel with its Gothic arched windows and somber light. Marion Faye bought it in the hour he saw it—it was a bargain—so big, so chill, so impractical—one had to go down to the cellar to make a sandwich—so gloomy, so sonorous, so sepul-

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chral that it was church for him, and all his other houses (with the exception of the town house, a complex affair) were no more than boudoirs for his pleasure, doll houses in liege to the attractive childhood he had never spent except for some rare bitch-perfumed hours with his mother.

Yes, this was a house for rare occasions, and he visited it seldom, and never in summer when Provincetown was a whore's trunk of frying hot dogs, boat excursionists from Boston, battalions of the gay and regiments of the hip—he saved it for rare weekends in fall and winter, and so far as most people knew, it was not even his house—he had given it on virtually permanent loan to the most extraordinary of his former call girls, a tall dignified Negress with a velvet sensuality who had made her fortune in company with Marion, and now—her various investments concealed—was a rich hostess of no small reputation in many parts of New York, her parties indeed so well run that her net of fine jazz captured the best of intellectual stimulation—what little there was in that dying electric city. This Negress, who had through her career a series of names (the last, by which people now knew her, being Cara Beauchamp) had found in herself a set of exquisitely parallel personalities like hand-worked nesting tables, and so had avoided the hermetic fate of many call girls and almost all prostitutes—she had dissolved that cyst of character, that prison of non-perceptive muscles which maroons even a high grade whore in self-pity, hysteria, and loathing for her material. No, this one was fluid, she had a touch of accommodation for all perverse duties, blown into a not uncool flame by her fortune in studying with a master. So she was capable of using her encyclopedic knowledge of the colliding congesting rhythms in the bodies of the strangers she met; and the shyest poor parcel of a man, a distinguished physicist let us say, ashy, halfway to the grave, with a dull grey suit and black scuffed shoes dulled to grey, and a pallor of face whose equivocal good health was yellow, and whose oncoming death was grey, was capable still of appealing to her: somewhere in that habit-haunted body and far-departed mind, somewhere in that racked frame which had all the animal magnetism of a catatonic worm (chill and bitter-smelling in its parts) there was a piston of will which would (all whore-patience and art properly applied) give her a memorable night even if the poor will-driven gentleman were

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half into the grave afterward with the outrage to his sedentary heart. So here was a man who could give her a furious pleasure, for an evening at least, and therefore meeting him at the door to her party, accepting the introduction from her good friend and favorite psychoanalyst (who will become for us a figure of obsessive interest later on) (he had introduced the physicist as an old college friend), she dipped into her enormous reserves of relaxed sensuous attention, took an immediate plot of the physicist's clang-riddled nerves, and came back with a tight formal smile and the suggestion of a feminine will-driven tic at the corner of her own eye (if she thus momentarily debased her beauty, she was seizing the opportunity to relax the muscles of her eye and make a friend—on the whole a profit for our hostess). Indeed she succeeded; the physicist liked her—he liked her even more when late in the evening and pleasantly if quietly—in his way—hysterically drunk with the blending of the tongues, the reentrate cool jazz of the combination for the night—four homosexual Negroes in horn-rimmed glasses—and the murderous ambiguities of such varied honey-wild pussy as paraded at that party, the physicist had the fair opportunity to discuss physics with the remarkable knife-eyed intelligence of the face in *café au lait* who had greeted him at the door. I choose their conversation to repeat because it is essential to our mystery, and if you find it bizarre you must recognize that we hover at the edge of an orgy of language, the nihilism of meaning fair upon us.

"Isn't modern physics to the square side?" she asked of him.

A true language of indeterminate functions, he was thinking, an expression of the off-phase waves of the Negro masses. "Oh, no, not at all, not really," he said. "After all, Einstein was no square."

"I could die that he is dead—so hoped to meet that man," Cara Beauchamp said, "he was hip—a funny man." She sighed for the dead. "But, like I mean, *procedurally*—aren't you physicists nowhere with Time?"

"Nowhere—the philosophical groundwork is lacking I suppose."

"Yes, you don't make the scene." She restrained her force and added softly, "Like Time is when you connect."

"It doesn't exist in between?" He had answered easily, pleased at how well he had picked up this contextual field, but then he repeated it, "Time does not exist when it makes no . . . connections?"

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Perhaps he was too drunk, but there was an old physicist's terror in the beauty of the thought. My God, maybe she's on to something, he was thinking.

"Well, it don't exist, and yet it does."

"Time rests as potential?" he asked, excitement in his dry sad voice, "rests there until the gap is jumped to Time dynamic."

"Yeah—potential and dynamic—that's Time. It dies if it don't connect," and for an instant she was as fond of him as a mother learning from her child. For the rest of her life she had two new words, and what words they were. Through all her unconscious were flexings of cellular pleasure—so much of her experience was rushing to the higher plateau of more precise language.

Actually she had been not altogether inspired in this conversation. She still had the masculine mind of a whore or a hostess—she was a business man—she searched for synthesis, the big view, and her ideas on Time had come from Marion. Finally she was a salesman—she cannibalized the salvageable from the junk of old conversations to put together some speed for the pitch of her conversation.

She could hardly have done otherwise. She came from a poor Harlem family, late-migrated to New York from the North Georgia line, and her mother had run a cheap Georgia brothel (three girls) and sold heroin in New York until the arithmetic of cutting the ounces wore her down. Cara was the first child in the family to be able to read and write with less difficulty than it took to load a trailer truck. Yet she now had the pride that they all came to her parties, the hothouse haul from Madison Avenue, advertising men and television people laughing at homey house jokes about the sick, curling themselves around a Martini or a model like ivy which slides over ubiquitously from vertical support to vertical support; there was the subtle cream of Negro entertainers from certain particular bistros at the moment not out of favor with Cara Beauchamp, there was a sprinkling from the theatre (those flamboyant timid people), there was a gossip columnist who exercised the discipline not to print a word of what he saw, one or two of the most overrated and/or berated young writers in America would be there, and one fashion photographer, not to mention the pads of Harlem and the cellars of the Village, painters (a growing collection of Abstract Expression-

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ists on her walls) pimps and pushers (those who had proved the most talented of her childhood companions), musicians, a labor leader (yes, there was one) and a banker. It had taken her months but a lawyer who was a friend had induced him to come, and Cara found enough in common to draw him back—her ideas about the personality of those investors with some credit rating whom an exurban bank, proud of its personal touch, might allow to kite a check for twenty-four hours so intrigued the banker as a merger of psychological nuance with fiduciary practice that he returned once or twice. Yes, there was a horde: movie stars who left early, promoters, producers, occasional professional athletes, surgeons, psychiatrists, councillors, pot-heads (discreet to be sure), hoodlums (who could contain themselves), college girls, poetesses . . . the apocryphal story was of her middle-aged Irish elevator operator who became so used to her odd visitors that even a plump Episcopalian prep school instructor, wearing his go-to-New-York homburg, hand in hand with a sloe-eyed Arab boy who looked like an untamed pet on the prowl from the Casbah gave the elevator man no pause: only a brace of bull-dykers ever did him in—a famous actress in a sailor's peajacket and a gargantuan blonde in pink mink went up together sipping away from long platinum cigarette holders at sticks of Turkish hashish until the smell of sugar and death made the elevator operator so high with the smoke of contact that he was as stone on the return down, and for the first time in thirteen years he dug into the hanging of his cage and floated it on loverly skill to the lobby with the awesome anticipatory joy of the first lunar explorer to kiss the tail of his rocket onto the acned skin of the moon.

So, there it was, the home of Cara Beauchamp, a ten-room cooperative apartment and circus overlooking the East River of the Fifties, with a collection of guests almost every Saturday night whose intellectual and physical connections were accelerating Time, and weighting the charge of future acceleration. No wonder that Cara gave it up for a month each year and disappeared into Provincetown where she had nothing more than a few close friends and entertainers to visit out the nights in Marion Faye's private church. Yes, she needed her *schule* as she called it, and she liked the surf-soothing hurdy-gurdy of this fishing town so poorly considered for even her social purposes that hardly anyone she knew was found there.

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But I must interrupt, for one pretense I can maintain no longer. I notice that I wander back and forth, speak of the pages which follow, and yet, even as I have the illusion that I put words together at a desk, and the little actions I describe have already happened to me, or to others, still I do not know who I am nor where I am, nor even if literally I write. Yet, just so soon as I suggest that I am without particular embodiment I feel bubbles of laughter at the peculiar present tense of my consciousness which sees into the past, is recovering the future, and yet does neither, for perhaps I scramble the order of Time in order to retrieve the order of form from what is formless and yet over-real. Like the easily distractible feather of attention in the gales of infancy, I move from dread to light amusement to metaphysical certainty, and yet away again as if no one is so real to me as the consciousness which leads me now, but for a moment probably, to the breath of my narrative, and I feel certain—I know not exactly why—that it was after this party, after the conversation between Cara Beauchamp and the physicist, that Marion called for the proper tuition to his instruction and made his demand: Cara was to give a weekend party in Provincetown for a select two dozen from their acquaintance, the guests to be flown up and back by chartered plane, and this in the middle of November when the New York season was on, and the weather in Provincetown was bound to be bad.

"Marion," she had answered, "explain what you're doing."

His extraordinary face (one of the handsomest cleanest most sensual faces ever cut from a block of boyish ice) smiled back in arch thought at her. "I feel in the mood for a party that will go on for awhile." Then he yawned, and his groin in remonstrance for this thespian's triumph of the casual, gave him a cruel pinch of a grip. He was empty again, the charge was down, he was moving into the late middle-age of some men's middle-thirties, a Dorian Gray whose secret portrait was fleshed within, painted by the outrages he had exacted of a hundred thousand nerves. He knew the prescription to reverse the process on the portrait, it was the last of the nostrums and it had worked once before; it was murder. Brave murder. Brave murder gave the charge of the man one killed. Time potential and Time dynamic—it was the grand connection, and the dead man's Time became one's own Time, his energies regenerated the dead circuits of one's own empty-balled Time, and one moved away with

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greater strength, new nerves and a heavier burden. For the balance (that natural grasp of moral justice which the old murder-tempted God still retained—should one hope so?) would be laden even more on the side of Hell, and Marion knew what would await him in Hell, the onanisms of connectionless Time, the misery of the lone chance in one out of the billion of billions to be born again. Hell, where his nerves (those advance intimations of a flesh-terrifying fire, electric in its cold) would unwind their unspeakable tension with the infinite slowness of nerves become Time in its death, the spiral spinning a blind spider's path, the dreams collapsed, the empire lost, and the fate of the world as well. That was the worst; that was his vanity; that he alone held the vision to save the world—if he failed, his agony would be all the greater for what a rage would be the rage of God. "Am I ready to die?" he asked, listening to the answer the portrait might give him, and the portrait said *no* with a murmur of dread. The balance of his deeds was dark to Marion, and from the Godlike eye with which he contemplated himself he knew he was still not Godly enough—it was beyond his vision whether the force of his life upon others had accelerated new love into the agonized fatigues of Time, or had worn Time closer to her hag-ridden dreams of the destiny that failed because it arrived too late, of the new conception which never reached the womb.

5.

The invitations went out, were accepted by almost everyone, the plane was chartered—two flights proved necessary—and the party took place. It is with some hesitation, and the awareness I have betrayed certain premises of your interest that I must now confess I will not be able to describe this party in rousing detail until we have taken a wide and still unforseeable circuit of the past. Indeed, it would probably be a disservice of the first order to insert ourselves too brusquely into the dance of deceptions, seductions, perversions and passions which the party whipped into being, the riot of new relationship an unlashed acceleration of the Time of the ladies and gentlemen present. To be successful a party must become more than was intended for it, and I can give you the mean contentment that by my measurement the party was not boring: it had an artist's assortment of those contradictory and varied categories of people who

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made up the obdurate materials of new sociological alloy in the heat-forge of a ball at Cara Beauchamp's. What gave this party an added attraction, an unconscious verve, was that there were guests who were not altogether what they appeared to be, a Russian spy for one, avid to snap up the friendship of our physicist, a spy of such importance that an agent of the FBI was also present, each of these gentlemen carefully furnished with a false life which was not his own. To complicate matters, there were two other operators with portfolio from the police: one, a narcotics agent, unfortunately addicted himself; another from the vice squad of New York City—what completed the circle was that the detective from the vice squad believed himself close on the proof that Marion Faye had murdered another detective from the vice squad some years before, which in fact was true, but what was unknown to any of these policemen (although the agent from the FBI smelled hints of the possibility) was that the Russian spy, suffering from the mitotic tension latent in the psyche of all spies, had not been content with a double life, but indeed had divided a part of himself again; certain of his more desperate and unprofessional activities in this country had spilled him into the broth of blackmail which nourished the vice squad detective who had been killed; Marion, in taking care of this precise act, had discovered the profession of the spy and so was able to use him for purposes which were by now related to his program for the party—if all of this seems complicated, I can only say that it is but a superficial counterfeit of the real complexities which involved a dozen other guests as well, including Shawn Sergius (born perhaps as Sergius O'Shaugnessy), the only creative personality ever to dominate television, and Dr. Joyce, the psychoanalyst, who had become so overextended beyond his humane means, and had so compromised his career, his profession, and his intimate honor that he was contemplating suicide long before he came to the party.

Indeed a suicide did take place (I do not yet know whether it was the doctor), it was followed by murder, a murder inflamed into fury by exactly that suicide, the suicide preceded by an orgy, the orgy by a series of communions in the act of coitus, both natural and illegal, by sodomists who dictated their characters upon weaker flesh, and copulations which failed as well as fornications which captured pure smell of the fact and left the lovers dancing fluxed with the

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rhythms and reflexes of one another. It was a ball. There were two dead bodies when all was done, and on one of them the town police found a notebook which contained a list, a peculiar list, for it included everyone, and yet there were more items on the list than people present, and titles applicable to more than one, as if some of the guests contained several categories within themselves. I give it as it was scribbled down, a most appetizing menu:

a queer
a cop
a crook

a Negro
a war hero
a movie star

an athlete
a dope addict
a socialite

a fisherman
an analyst
a call girl

a whore
a businessman
a mother
a father

a child
a sibling
a television entertainer
a politician

a writer
a painter
a jazzman
a rapist

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a Timeless wonder (originally a man but altered to a facsimile of woman)

(There was a line drawn here)

a physicist
a doctor

a taxicab driver
an assembly-line worker
a poodle

a police dog
a boxer
servants

(and another line drawn here)

a ghost (God?) (from the hole—he?)

a house
a tree
a pact
a cemetery

a bug
a flower
a rat
a cow
a horse

an insane man

a storm
a plane
an executioner

a bullfighter

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One could do worse than to read this list again. I wonder if in the history of our republic there has been a party equal in montage: a movie star and a rat, a rapist and a war hero, a psychoanalyst and a call girl, poodle and assembly-line worker, child and sibling, an executioner and a ghost, a cemetery and a television entertainer; yes, it is like one of those new games which trap psychology and sociology in a three dollar cardboard box—"Theatre" it could be called, for one chooses one's role: be a whore, a physicist, a jazz musician, a queer—how dreary is our republic that so few people would buy the game.

A bloody aye! What is to be said of the dead body? How extraordinary a man—if it was a man—to compile such a schedule of personality when he must have known how close he was himself to being taken to the cleaners'—that quick phrase which contains the notion that death purifies.

But death does not purify says my Reason, death dissipates: our consciousness radiates away from ourselves as the cellves deteriorate (forgive the pun, but we speak of death), we slip away—wastefully, unheard but for the night air, our emotions, sneaks, smells, terrors, titillations, thoughts, projects, plans, and—if we have died too late—the dull blanketing gas of our boredom all enter the air, are breathed by others and exhaled away again—perhaps we have influenced the million light years of their imagination by a millimeter. The fats, the blood, the muscles and the bone sink into the earth again (if we are so fortunate as not to stifle in a deluxe hermetic crypt) yes, with the pores of a pinewood box, we give of our poor soured flesh to the wistful cemetery grass—in a century or two perhaps they will let the cows enter there to eat and make the milk and give the meat which will permit one distant relative of a molecule, ten hundred dynasties of family removed, to slip into a human body again. A few of our cells may make the transmigration from our body, which is gone, to the body of another—all that was us reduced to a molecule whose minor deviations from the classical form of the giant protein chain recapture (as do all deviations from classical form) some wry shrunken ion's head of the contradictions and possibilities which were once a man, general of the armies of his cells, Deus to his body-universe.

And is that all? a sacred cow ("I dig the Hindu bit," said Marion

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once) our best poor bridge to make it back, no matter how cruelly reduced, to the life of those beings who have the power—all too unconsciously—to shift the changing beat of Time? Or is there more?

And if I say I think there is, I turn the key into the category of my own secret, for as some of you may have sensed by now, the list I offered up to your amusement is from me, and I am, oh yes, now I know who I am or was, I am the dead man on the floor, for so I am, yes (what a pure moment of grief at all that has not been done), I am in the endless deliberate instant of the vision given by death, the million dying spasms of the radiating consciousness of words, this last of me, wailing within, turbulent with the terror that I no longer know where I am, nor if there are voices to hear me and answer back. I am off finally, departed on the demented journey whose first echoes I knew in those over-promiscuous moments of malice, license, promise and horror at the heart of a cocktail party when, too drunk with the knowledge of what courage was demanded of me, and what little I had, I used to close my eyes, sitting in the saviorship of a chair, and I would give up the ghost of ego-erect will, and let the vertigo of the liquors suck me away, a far long way in those few instants when I was spinning out with a rapidity to match the salacious pace of our revolving earth, and I was one with something other until the wife or the mistress or whichever latest embodiment of the bitch-goddess was at my elbow, nudging me back, feminine fingers of fury at spineless disappearing man wrenching me with procreative determination clean up to the living so I would hear:

"Are you all right?"

"I was thinking of something," I would say, "and I like to think with my eyes closed," but that was the lie of appearances to share between us, a bread of false flour, forcibly refreshing me back to my determinations, back to the party after the long swoon away.

But now I go, the vortex does not stop, the winds of the whirlpool—God's gyre again?—are heavy with consequence, and I sink or do I fly? all vectors gone, while in my center, clear as the icy eye of cocaine, I race toward a point of judgment, my courage and cowardice, (my masculine thrust and retreat from the avaricious energy-plucking hairy old grotto of Time) trailing behind me in that comet of connotations which is the past topologically reversed by the vision of *now,* as if in recovering the past I am chasing after the future, so

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that the past, the net of the name-giving surface-perceiving past is my future again, and I go out into the past, into the trail of the cold eye of past relationship, he eye of my I at home in the object-filled chaos of any ego I choose, at least for this short while between the stirrup and the ground, for in an instant—will it be eternally long? like some cell at the crisis of its cellvish destiny, I race into the midnight mind, the dream-haunted determinations of that God of whom I was a part, and will He choose me to be born again? have I proven one of his best? am I embryo in some belly of the divisible feminine Time, or is the journey yet to make? Or worst of all am I?—and the cry which is without sound shrieks in my ears—am I already on the way out? a fetor of God's brown sausage in His time of diarrhea, oozing and sucking and bleating like a fecal puppy about to pass away past the last pinch of the divine sphincter with only the toilet of Time, oldest hag of them all, to spin me away into the spiral of star-lit empty waters.

So I approach Him, if I have not already lost Him, God, in His destiny, in which He may succeed, or tragically fail, for God like Us suffers the ambition to make a destiny more extraordinary than was conceived for Him, yes God is like Me, only more so.

Unless—spinning instead through the dark of some inner Space —the winds are icy here—I do no more than delude myself, fall back into that hopeless odyssey where libido never lingers, and my nature is nothing other than to search for the Devil while I carry with me the minds of some of you.

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Renato Poggioli

BORIS PASTERNAK

Boris Leonidovich Pasternak was born in Moscow in 1890. His mother was a gifted pianist, his father a well-known painter and a professor at the local Academy of Fine Arts. The young Pasternak devoted himself to the arts cultivated by his parents, especially music, which he studied under no less a master than the famous composer Skryabin. He also studied philosophy at the Universities of Moscow and Marburg, where, under the guidance of Hermann Cohen, he came into contact with the neo-Kantian and neo-Hegelian schools. He began his poetic career at a precocious age, in that feverish avant-garde atmosphere which marked the first pre-war era. He was one of a little-known group of Moscow Futurists who were connected with Khlebnikov, but who also went back to other models, as recent as Ivan Konevskoy, a forgotten poet of the *fin du siècle,* or as remote as Yazykov, who was a contemporary of Pushkin. The young poet kept a loose association with the Futurist movement, and later contributed to the *Lef* of Mayakovsky. In 1914, he published his first volume of verse, *The Twin in the Clouds,* which remained unnoticed. His second book, *Beyond the Barriers,* appeared in 1917, and was already the work of an expert craftsman, although it did not bear the imprint of his more mature genius.

It was to be Pasternak's two succeeding volumes that would reveal the rarity and novelty of his gift. In 1922, when the poems collected under the title *My Sister, Life,* which had been written in 1917 and circulated for years in manuscript, finally appeared in book form, they marked the emergence of a major talent. In 1923, Pasternak published his second important collection, *Themes and Variations,* in which his style became at once more sober and more extreme. The best work from these two volumes, which exercised a

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perceptible influence not only on the younger but also on the more established writers, was afterwards collected in *Two Books* (1927). After a long interval, Pasternak returned to lyric poetry with the book *Second Birth* (1933), which was followed in the same year by *Poems,* the first full collection of his verse.

It was in this period that the poet's ordeal began. He remained loyal to his calling in a social order admitting no other loyalty than to itself. He had to fight singlehandedly a sustained rear-guard action in order to avoid surrendering unconditionally to the political pressure of the regime, augmented by the vicious attacks of sycophantic critics, the whispering campaigns and the outright calumnies of his enemies and rivals. The main accusations leveled against him were that he had committed the unspeakable crimes of individualism and formalism, and that he had shown indifference, even hostility, to Marxist ideology. His stubborn refusal to obey the party's "general line," and to change his poetry into an instrument of propaganda, was branded as a betrayal. The literary press treated him as an outlaw; the writers' association, as an outcast.

Yet, in a spirit not of compromise but of humility, Pasternak tried to give poetic form to his desire to connect himself with the will of the Russian people. He did so by trying to understand the Russian present through the perspective of history, and in 1926 he published his poem *Spektorsky,* in which, following similar experiments by Bely and Blok, he used the protagonist's character, whose name gives its title to this work, as an autobiographical mirror, reflecting not only the poet's personality but also the age out of which he had come. In the same years Pasternak wrote and published (1927) a cycle of lyrical fragments, re-evoking, under the title *1905,* that "little revolution" which Lenin had labeled a "general rehearsal" for the upheaval of 1917. That rhapsody was followed by a long, simple episode, *Lieutenant Schmidt,* more epic in tone and content, retelling the story of the mutiny of the battleship *Potemkin* in the Black Sea with a naked power reminiscent of Eisenstein's film.

It was in the same period that Pasternak composed his prose tales, which he collected twice, under the titles *Stories* and *Airways,* in 1925 and 1933. The most important of them is the opening piece, "The Childhood of Lüwers," written in a tone and style that Western critics have compared to Proust, although it reminds one more

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of *Malte Laurids Brigge* by Rainer Maria Rilke. (The Austrian poet had remained a life-long friend of the Pasternak family, from the time of his first journey to Russia, when the elder Pasternak had painted his portrait.) The theme of this story is feminine puberty, the forebodings of womanhood in the body and soul of a young girl, which the writer evokes with great subtlety and insight. In 1931 Pasternak published his literary and intellectual autobiography, which he entitled, with enigmatic irony, *The Safe-Conduct*. The narrative is in the first person, yet the ego of the narrator never intrudes and often retires into the background, giving way to a detached representation of persons and places, of ideas and things. The last part of the book is dominated by the figure of Mayakovsky acting like a mask or a ghost. In the finale, which recalls the official funeral of the poet, the palpable, almost bodily presence of that monstrous abstraction, "our Russian state," haunts the scene like a "stone guest." Quite understandably, the authorities never permitted a reprint or a new edition of *The Safe-Conduct*.

In the following years, Pasternak managed to evade the required lauding of the regime and still function as a writer by devoting almost all his energies to translating. In his youth he had translated many foreign writers, especially German, from Goethe and the Romantics to the Expressionists, but later he was attracted by more exotic figures, and in 1935 he published an anthology of Georgian poets. More recently he tried his hand at the tragedies of Shakespeare, producing splendid versions of such plays as *Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet,* and *Anthony and Cleopatra.* Yet even then he never gave up his own writing, although nothing of his appeared in print after the publication of his *Collected Poems* in 1932 and 1936. A decade later he took advantage of the short-lived calm after the Second World War to publish two slim collections (the second is but an expansion of the first), entitled *On Early Trains* (1945) and *The Vast Earth* (1946). They were followed by a long, silent spell which the poet finally broke by publishing a few new poems in literary periodicals during the brief thaw following Stalin's death.

Despite its native originality and independent growth, Pasternak's poetry still seems to preserve the traces of its early connection with Futurism. What still ties his poetry to the futuristic experiment,

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and especially to the manner of Khlebnikov, is his conception and treatment of the word. While the typical decadent or symbolist poet seems to control the music of language by yielding to it, Pasternak masters his medium by doing violence to the very nature of poetic speech. His idiom is like a mosaic made of broken pieces. The fragments are shapeless, and if they ultimately fit within the pattern of a line, or within the design of a poem, it is only because of the poet's will. The cement holding them together is either syntax or rhythm, more frequently both. From his early beginnings, Pasternak tightened the syntax of Russian poetic speech as no modern poet had ever done. At the same time, in reaction against both the vagueness of late symbolistic verse, which was a kind of *vers libéré,* and the declamatory effusions of *vers libre,* characteristic of Mayakovsky and his followers, he chose to use, with strictness and rigor, regular and even closed metrical forms. In doing so he succeeded in reconciling within his poetry the demands of both the old and the new. Like all the most successful figures of the avant-garde, Pasternak (who is its only surviving representative in Russia today) was thus able to prove that tradition also must play a role in the revolutions of art.

There is an obvious parallel between this historical function and the internal structure of the poetry of Pasternak. With terms taken from the vocabulary of our "New Critics," one could say that his verse constantly aims at tension and paradox. His poems are equally ruled by passion and intelligence, or rather, by a reciprocal interplay of emotion and wit. This is why Prince Mirsky compared him to John Donne, by which that critic probably meant that Pasternak's poetry is "metaphysical" not in the original, but in the modern and revived sense of that term. Yet his work is better understood if placed within the immediate and local tradition from which it sprang. If we do so, we may find that the concept of "transmental poetry" is the frame of reference we need. In their attempt to create a poetry purely verbal in essence, some of the so-called Cubo-Futurists wrote poems in what they called "transmental language," or in newly coined words without meaning, and with no other semantic value than that of their sound effects. The experiment was bound to fail: poetry can never become, at least in the sense that painting or sculpture can, an abstract art. Poetry cannot but be either expressionistic or ideational; and Pasternak made poetry, so to say, non-representa-

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tional, by forcing it to be both things at once. One could say that he succeeded where the Cubo-Futurists had failed, by using, instead of nonsense language, a highly complex linguistic mosaic, made of an interplay of denotative and connotative values; or, more simply, a diction ruled at once by mental balance and emotional stress. It is only in such a context that one might define his style as a modern Baroque, reducing to sense and order a verbal matter apparently incongruous and absurd.

Pasternak's poetry, to quote a line from his favorite foreign master and friend, Rainer Maria Rilke, seems thus to lead *zum Arsenal der unbedingten Dinge*. Yet in the process it changes all the nondescript objects cluttering the world of experience not into abstract symbols but into living, suffering, human-like creatures. The anthropomorphic pathos of Pasternak's imagination brings him closer to the Romantics than any of his immediate predecessors with the exclusion of Blok. The poet must have been aware of this, since, unlike his great and distant contemporary, Khodasevich, who found a master in Pushkin, he sought a model in Lermontov, the Russian poet who felt and understood better than any other the tears of things, and who would perhaps have approved of Pasternak's claim that "one composes verses with sobs." It is equally significant that in recent times Pasternak has shown some interest in Shelley, whose vision he finds akin to that of Blok. Yet Pasternak's neo-romanticism is strange and novel, so much so that it can be compared only to some of the most extreme works of modern art.

The artistic game of Pasternak consists in a sort of balancing act: or in the attempt to fix in a precarious, and yet firm equilibrium, a congeries of heterogeneous objects, of vibrant and labile things. His poetry seems to pass, almost at the same time, through two different and even opposite phases. The first is a moment of eruption and irruption, of frenzy and paroxysm; the second, which often overlaps the first, is the moment when matter seems to harden and freeze. Burning rivers of lava congeal at a nod. The sound and fury of lightning suddenly become, as in the poem so named, "a thunder eternally instantaneous." Fires are extinguished at a breath. Showers and thunderstorms abruptly stop; floods suddenly dry up. Often the same poem seems to be written now in hot, now in cold blood. This dualism may perhaps be traced in, or symbolized by, the early edu-

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cation of the poet, which was both philosophical and musical. Yet, while his cadence ends in dissonance, and his logic leads to dissent, such a double discordance resolves itself into a harmony of its own.

The raw material of Pasternak's poetry is introspection. Yet Pasternak treats the Self as object rather than as subject. Thus, in a non-mystical sense, one could apply to him Rimbaud's formula: *car je est un autre.* Sometimes he seems to treat the psyche as an *alter ego,* as a neutral and an alien being, to be seldom, and if possible only indirectly, approached. Hence the negative hyperbole by which he claims, in one of his poems, to have appealed in prayer to his soul only twice in a hundred years, while other men do so at every instant. Pasternak, with the firm hand of a hunter—or tamer—always holds his own spirit in his power, like a fluttery, wounded bird, and often encloses it in the solid cage of a stanza, from which the prisoner vainly tries to escape through the broken mesh of a rhyme.

Many critics have remarked that Pasternak looks at the world with the eyes of the newly born. It would be better to say that he looks at it with *reborn* eyes. As suggested by the title of one of his books, poetry is for him a "second birth," through which man sees again the familiar as strange, and the strange as familiar. Yet, whether strange or familiar, every object is unique. To give the effect of this uniqueness, the poet paints every single thing as if it were a monad, unwilling or unable to escape from the rigid frame of its own contours. Such an effect is primarily achieved through the harshness and hardness of his imagery, through the frequent syncopes of his speech, through the staccato quality of his meter. Rhythmically, he prefers a line heavily hammered, where no stress is blurred, and every beat is pounded as in a heel dance. He fails however to extend this rapid, metallic quality to rhyme, which he treats with the negligence and freedom of Mayakovsky, and which he describes, following Verlaine's famous definition (*"ce bijou d'un sou"*), as a "check-room ticket."

Though some of his poems, especially the earlier ones, are romantically set against vast exotic backgrounds (for instance against the lofty mountains of the Caucasian landscape), Pasternak usually prefers a restricted, bourgeois, and prosaic scenery, such as a park, an orchard, a garden, or a villa in the suburbs. Yet even "backyards,

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ponds, palings," are not mere backdrops, but, as the poet says, "categories of passions, hoarded in the human heart." His poetry thus leans towards a highly personal version of the pathetic fallacy, involving in his case not only non-human creatures, such as animals and plants, but also inanimate things or man-made objects. For many of his poems Pasternak chooses, like Mallarmé in his *poèmes d'intérieur,* indoor settings. Yet unlike the French poet, the Russian introduces within the four walls of a room cosmic powers and elemental forces. This is especially true in the cycle, "Themes and Variations," which is part of the book by the same title. In "Variation 3" Pasternak describes the now empty study where Pushkin has just finished writing his famous poem "The Prophet." Great geographical and historical landmarks, from the arctic city of Archangel to the river Ganges, from the Sahara to the Egyptian Sphinx, seem to witness in silence, along with the molten wax dripping from a burning candle, the drying up of the ink on the manuscript. In this, as in other poems, Pasternak surprises not only by a violent association of disparate elements, but by the even more violent dissociation of each one of them from the frame of reference to which it naturally belongs. The ripe pear which one of his poems describes while falling to the ground along with its leafy stem and torn branch, can be taken as an emblem of his art. Hence the frequency in his verse of such words as fracture or breach. At the end of the closing poem of the cycle "Rupture" (meaning here a lovers' quarrel or their break), the opening of a window is equated with the opening of a vein. In the same piece the poet transfers the trauma of life to an uncreated thing: for instance, to the piano, which "licks its foam," as if it were a human being in an epileptic fit. Yet even in metaphors like these, the poet transcends both pathos and bathos, reshaping the disorder of experience into a vision of his own. If he succeeds in doing so, it is because in his poetry (as he said in *The Safe-Conduct*) the author remains silent and lets the image speak. In this ability to infuse words with passion, rather than passion with words, Pasternak has no rival among his contemporaries, and, among the poets of the previous generation he yields only to Alexander Blok.

While Mayakovsky's imagery is hyperbolic and iconoclastic, as it tries either to sublimate reality or to degrade it, Pasternak's is dramatic and pathetic, aiming to convey the poet's vital experience in

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psychic terms. His metaphors tend to express the shock and wonder of *being* in abridged and concentrated form. In his recent *Notes on Translating Shakespearean Tragedies* (1954), the poet defines metaphor as "the shorthand of the spirit." Thus Pasternak views metaphor not as an emblem or symbol, which suggests and conceals, but as a graphic scheme or a sketchy outline of the experienced thing. This may well be the reason why this artist has never indulged, like so many modern poets, in the false mystique of his own calling and craft. Poetry is for him not the revelation of a higher harmony, but simply the direct expression of "the dissonance of this world."

A poetry so understood gives the immediate sense of a reality endowed with no other glamor than that of being reality itself: "a suburb, not a refrain." One could say that Pasternak has always followed the principle stated by the fictional protagonist of his last book: "Art never seemed to me an object or aspect of form, but rather a mysterious and hidden component of content."

It was in April 1954 that Pasternak announced in the journal *The Banner* the imminent completion of a work in progress, entitled *Doctor Zhivago*. The author defined it as "a novel in prose," an obvious play on the subtitle "novel in verse" of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*. The announcement was followed by a series of poems, supposedly written by the novel's protagonist or Doctor Zhivago himself. These poems, predominantly religious in theme, often literally Christian in tone, were destined, as Pasternak then declared, to close the novel as a fictitious appendix of posthumous papers or documents, through which the reader would understand better the personage to whom the writer attributed their authorship. Both within and without Russia, however, those pieces were generally read as if their real author had supposedly written them in an autobiographical vein rather than in a fictional key. Later on, when the "thaw" which followed Stalin's death was coming to an end, Pasternak made a few semi-public readings of the completed work, and the harshness of the quasi-official criticism of his colleagues made him realize that his novel could never appear in Soviet Russia without changes so radical as to disfigure it. The manuscript was subsequently smuggled abroad, so that it could be published in its original form. Despite an official Soviet protest, a Milan publisher managed to issue an Italian

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translation of the original text, and now this new and challenging product of Pasternak's talent is available in English too.[1]

The novel is huge in size and broad in scope, and unfolds its hero's fate from his childhood to his premature death on the eve of the great Stalinist purge. Raised in the idealism of the early part of the century, Zhivago trains himself to become both a doctor and a poet, thus following the double call of charity and grace. He marries, but the revolution forces him to settle in the Urals, where he is separated from his family and made to serve as a medical officer in a Red guerrilla unit during the civil war. His only consolation is his love for Lara, an old Moscow acquaintance, who represents in the novel the intuitive wisdom of life. When the crisis is over, he returns to Moscow, and in 1929 he dies there of a heart attack.

The narrative of Doctor Zhivago's existence merges with that of other, numberless characters, originally connected as neighbors, relatives, or friends, and who, in the course of the story, meet again in the most surprising circumstances. Although traditional in structure, the novel lacks a well-made plot: coincidence works beyond the limits of verisimilitude, taxing the credulity of the reader, and failing to raise the whims of chance or of the writer's fancy to the level of either destiny or providence. Deprived of an epic or tragic design, the narrative unfolds as a rhapsody: and this explains why all its beauties are but fragmentary ones. There are many memorable episodes, but the novel's high point is that describing the hibernation of the Red partisans in the *tayga,* and the attempt of some of their wives to reach them by cutting a path through the snow and ice of a primeval forest.

The protagonist survives many physical trials yet dies young, wasted by the fever of life. Up to the end he faces each test with both the compliance of his will and the resistance of his conscience. He acts at once like a witness and a victim, never like an avenger or judge. His mind often says "yea" to the reality to which his heart says "nay." Ivan Karamazov accepted God while rejecting the world He had created: Doctor Zhivago similarly accepts the postulate of the revolution while rejecting many of its corollaries. From this viewpoint there is no doubt that the protagonist represents the author's outlook. The writer refuses, however, to intervene directly in the

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narrative, speaking only through his characters. Yet we hear again his unique voice in the descriptive passages, and especially in those vivid images by which he constantly suggests to the reader that man, as well as time, is out of joint.

Perhaps the only characters who speak solely for themselves are those representing the younger generation in the novel's epilogue, which jumps in time to Russian life today, twenty years after the death of the protagonist. There we meet the sons of some of the novel's main characters. The regime had recalled those young men from deportation and exile, and they had rehabilitated themselves politically by defending the fatherland against the German invaders. It is difficult to say whether Pasternak considers these young men as the children of the old bondage or the harbingers of a freer world. In a sense they seem to turn more toward the past than toward the future: perhaps they are also, as the author says of many others, naive and innocent slaves who cannot help idealizing the slavery which is still their lot. Survivors of one upheaval, these young people may well disappear in the next one.

Despite all appearances to the contrary, it is this perplexing epilogue, more than any other parallel, which reveals that Pasternak wrote *Doctor Zhivago*—as other readers have already remarked—on the pattern of *War and Peace*. It is well known that Tolstoy conceived at first of his great novel as a long introduction to the homecoming, after twenty years of Siberian exile, of a revolutionary of the "Decembrist" generation. The conception was discarded, but its residues are still visible in the epilogue of Tolstoy's masterpiece, which projects the romantic liberalism and the naive poltical idealism of Pierre and Nikolinka, the young son of Prince Andrey. In the light of his historical knowledge, the Russian, if not the Western reader, knows that both tutor and ward are marked for sacrifice by their political dreams. *Doctor Zhivago* is not a historical novel in the sense of *War and Peace,* since it deals with the contemporary age, an epoch not yet closed. Hence its epilogue is problematic rather than prophetic. Yet this difference is not important; for *Doctor Zhivago,* like *War and Peace,* is written against history. What really matters is that Pasternak's protest rests on other grounds, and may well contain a message just the opposite of Tolstoy's. In *War and Peace* all the violence and cunning of history ultimately yield to the law of nature, to the universal principles of life and death, to the wars and

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peaces of being, which reduce all diplomacy and strategy to senseless games, vainly attempting to shape the destiny of the human race. In Tolstoy's view mankind survives the ordeal of history not in the chaos of individual life but in the wholeness and singleness of the species. The immortal cell of human life is the family, which triumphs, always and everywhere, over the destructive force of that monster which men call "reason of state." In Tolstoy's novel the issue is simplified, as the reason of state is symbolized by the aggressive imperialism of a foreign power: hence patriotism coincides with the moral and practical interest of that patriarchal household which for Tolstoy represents an ideal way of life.

In Pasternak's novel, however, history manifests itself as civil war and domestic strife, in a "permanent revolution" which is at once material and spiritual warfare, a total struggle without quarter or truce. Through technology, ideology, and social planning, history is now able to submit to its will the nation, the class, and the family —perhaps the world itself. But its weakest victim may be also its most elusive enemy: and that victim and enemy is the single person, the individual soul. Hence the voice protesting here is the one that says not "we" but "I." Here it is not Mother Russia, but one of her orphan children, who, like a fairytale Kutuzov, defends his little yet precious treasure, which is personal dignity and private life, by withdrawing into other dimensions than those of space and time. Such a stubborn retreat of the spirit is *Doctor Zhivago's* main motive, perhaps its only one: and it is the exceptional nobility of this theme that turns Pasternak's novel, if not into a masterpiece, at least into a spiritual document of great significance, which brings to us a very different message than that of *War and Peace,* and the tidings of a new time. Nothing conveys better the sense of this difference than the plants symbolizing the "tree of life" in each novel. In one we have the old oak which Prince Andrey suddenly sees rejuvenated by the sap of spring; in the other we have that evergreen thicket, almost buried by ice and snow, holding high a branch full of berries in the heart of the Siberian winter. Pasternak's "golden bough," unlike Tolstoy's, is thus a burning bramble that shines and consumes itself mystically and ecstatically in the desert of the Self, in the cold land of the spirit.

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In his article on *Doctor Zhivago* in *Partisan Review,* Nicola Chiaromonte aptly described the novel as "a meditation on history, that is, on the infinite distance which separates the human conscience from the violence of history, and permits a man to remain a man . . ." But it is important to note that the depth of the meditation represents something new in Pasternak's work. There is no doubt that in such narrative poems as *1905* and *Lieutenant Schmidt* the poet had tried to come to terms with historical reality rather than to face it as a critic and judge. Only once did he express his sense of alienation from Soviet society: in that page of his long autobiographical essay *The Safe-Conduct* where he described Mayakovsky's funeral, haunted by the state power which the dead poet had served only to be crushed by it. As for Pasternak's lyrical poems, they had often expressed in passing (and not without a sense of guilt) the poet's attempt to shun or to transcend the historical experience of his nation and his time. Nothing exemplifies better such an attempt than an early piece dealing with the secluded workings of the poetic imagination, where the poet's voice suddenly bursts out with the question: "Children, what century is it, outside in our courtyard?" That question, both sophisticated and naive, hints that the poet was then convinced that the artistic mind is innately indifferent to the dimension of time, to the category of history. Later, however, Pasternak seemed to realize that such indifference is impossible, and that the self was bound to merge, whether willingly or unwillingly, with the historical process. But it is true that Pasternak claimed in another poem that the poet could at least evade contemporary history by projecting himself into the future, or, as he said, by escaping like steam, through the chinks of fate, from the burning peat of dead time.

Many similar statements could be quoted from Pasternak's earlier and later verse; yet, taken together, all of them sound like apologies which the poet addressed not so much to the regime as to public opinion, or rather, to an élite able to understand equally the reason of poetry and the reason of state. Yet the poet seemed to know, at least in the depth of his art, that any reconciliation between art and politics was fundamentally impossible. Hence that sense of both pride and shame in all of Pasternak's statement on the subject: the pride of his unconquerable loneliness, and the shame of being unable

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to pay the revolution the tribute which all pay, and which may be justly due it.

Pasternak continued to grapple with these questions during the long years of a silence which was at least in part self-imposed; and at the end of that period he reached the conclusion that lyrical poetry had become too limited and subjective a vehicle to allow him to express what was no longer a purely private attitude toward revolution and the dialectic of history. After presenting his poet's case in verse, he felt that now he should present the case of man in prose. The writer was still in an apologetic mood, but the apology he now wanted to make was a far more universal one; and he wished to address it, beyond official Russia, to the Russian people, and even to his Western brethren. He felt that the proper vehicle for such an apology, which was to be also a protest, could be only narrative prose, the traditional tool of the Russian literary genius, which expressed its ethos and art in that "classical" and "critical" realism of which "socialist realism" was but a monstrous caricature. If Pushkin's "poetry" had never denied "truth," so the "truth" of the "classical" and "critical" realists had never denied "poetry"; and this may help us to understand why, the first time Pasternak spoke in public of the novel he was then writing, he called *Doctor Zhivago* a "novel in prose."

The poet himself recently explained this new aesthetic and moral view in a reply to a series of questions by a South American literary journal: "Fragmentary, personal poems are hardly suited to meditations on such obscure, new, and solemn events. Only prose and philosophy can attempt to deal with them. . . ." Here Pasternak seems to echo, unknowingly, Sartre's statement that prose, unlike poetry, should always be *engagée*; nor does it matter that *engagement* for Pasternak involves different, even opposing values: not social obligations but moral ones. Pasternak seems to feel that such an *engagement* was impossible while he was only a lyrical poet; and this is why the author of *Doctor Zhivago* spoke disdainfully of his poetic work in his reply to the questionnaire. By doing so he merely underscored something which he had hinted at in the novel itself. Nothing in *Doctor Zhivago* has a more autobiographical ring than the comment on the literary career of the protagonist. Zhivago "had dreamed about writing a book on life, in which to express the most wonderful things he had seen and understood in the world. Yet for such a book

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he was too young, and in the meanwhile he went on writing poems, as a painter who all his life draws studies for a painting still in his mind."

It would be unfair to Pasternak both as man and writer to accept his retrospective claim that his poetic production was but a gradual preparation for *Doctor Zhivago,* which is a moral act and a psychological document of great value, though not the culmination of his work. His poems are more than simple preludes to the novel; and though *Doctor Zhivago* towers over all Soviet fiction, this is due not only to Pasternak's stature as a novelist but also to the mediocrity of his rivals. What we prefer to emphasize is that this "novel in prose" proves more passionately and eloquently, yet in a less spirited and witty way than his poems, the same truth: that even in Communist Russia there are moral "pockets" permitting that most bourgeois creation, the "sentimental education" of the self, the *Bildungroman* of the soul.

In his poetry and his earlier prose, no less than in this novel, Pasternak had asserted and defended the private rights of the spirit in a forthright manner, without a false idealization or mystique. He has never rejected history, society or revolution in the name of art, nor has he ever longed for a purity which is not of this world. Pasternak believes we may "purge" the soul, rather than "cleanse" it; and this is the catharsis that *Doctor Zhivago* in the end achieves. Perhaps after such an act of purgation, the author might feel free to write poetry again. I, for one, should like to see Pasternak do so, because I find Pasternak's poems more vital and exciting than this novel, which lacks the tension of his earlier works, so challenging in their inborn avant-gardism. If Pasternak should receive the Nobel Prize—and I here submit his name as that of the worthiest candidate—I do hope he will be honored as poet as well as novelist.

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Isaac Deutscher

THE WANDERING JEW AS THINKER AND REVOLUTIONARY*

I

. . . I remember that when as a child I read the *Midrash* I came across a story and a description of a scene which gripped my imagination. It was the story of Rabbi Meir, the great saint, sage, and the pillar of Mosaic orthodoxy and co-author of the *Mishna,* who took lessons in theology from a heretic Elisha ben Abiyuh, nicknamed Akher (The Stranger). Once on a Sabbath, Rabbi Meir went out on a trip with his teacher, and as usual they became engaged in deep argument. The heretic was riding a donkey, and Rabbi Meir, as he could not ride on a Sabbath, walked by his side and listened so intently to the words of wisdom falling from heretical lips, that he failed to notice that he and his teacher had reached the ritual boundary which Jews were not allowed to cross on a Sabbath. At that moment the great heretic turned to his pupil and said: "Look, we have reached the boundary—we must part now; you must not accompany me any further—go back!" Rabbi Meir went back to the Jewish community while the heretic rode on—beyond the boundaries of Jewry.

There was enough in this scene to puzzle an orthodox Jewish child. Why, I wondered, did Rabbi Meir take his lessons from the heretic? Why did he show him so much affection? Why did he defend him against other rabbis? My heart, it seems, was with the heretic. Who was he? I asked. He appeared to be in Jewry and yet out of it. He showed a curious respect for his pupil's orthodoxy when he sent him back to the Jews on the holy Sabbath; but he himself,

* This article is based on a paper read before a large audience in London for the Jewish Book Week, in February 1958, under the title "The Non-Jewish Jew in Modern European Thought."

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disregarding canon and ritual, rode beyond the boundaries. When I was thirteen or perhaps fourteen I began to write a drama on Akher and Rabbi Meir and tried to find out more about Akher's character. What made him transcend Judaism? Was he a Gnostic? Was he the adherent of some other school of Greek or Roman philosophy? I could not find the answers, and I did not manage to go beyond the first act of my drama.

The Jewish heretic who transcends Jewry belongs to a Jewish tradition. You may, if you like, view Akher as a prototype of those great revolutionaries of modern thought—you may do so, if you necessarily wish to place them within any Jewish tradition. They all went beyond the boundaries of Jewry. They all—Spinoza, Heine, Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, Trotsky, and Freud—found Jewry too narrow, too archaic, and too constricting. They all looked for ideals and fulfillment beyond it, and they represent the sum and substance of much that is greatest in modern thought, the sum and substance of the most profound upheavals that have taken place in philosophy, sociology, economics, and politics in the last three centuries.

Have they anything in common with one another? Have they perhaps impressed mankind's thought so greatly because of their special "Jewish genius"? I do not believe in the exclusive genius of any race. Yet I think that in some ways they were very Jewish indeed. They had in themselves something of the quintessence of Jewish life and of the Jewish intellect. They were *a priori* exceptional in that as Jews they dwelt on the borderlines of various civilizations, religions, and national cultures. They were born and brought up on the borderlines of various epochs. Their minds matured where the most diverse cultural influences crossed and fertilized each other. They lived on the margins or in the nooks and crannies of their respective nations. They were each in society and yet not in it, of it and yet not of it. It was this that enabled them to rise in thought above their societies, above their nations, above their times and generations, and to strike out mentally into wide new horizons and far into the future.

It was, I think, an English Protestant biographer of Spinoza who said that only a Jew could carry out that upheaval in the philosophy of his age that Spinoza carried out—a Jew who was not bound by the dogmas of the Christian Churches, Catholic and Protestant, nor

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by those of the faith in which he had been born. Neither Descartes nor Leibnitz could free themselves to the same extent from the shackles of the medieval scholastic tradition in philosophy.

Spinoza was brought up under the influences of Spain, Holland, Germany, England, and the Italy of the Renaissance—all the trends of human thought that were at work at that time shaped his mind. His native Holland was in the throes of bourgeois revolution. His ancestors, before they came to the Netherlands, had been Spanish-Portuguese *Maranim,* crypto-Jews, at heart Jews, outwardly Christians, as were many Spanish Jews on whom the Inquisition had forced the baptism. After the Spinozas had come to the Netherlands they disclosed themselves as Jews; but, of course, neither they nor their close descendants were strangers to the intellectual climate of Christianity.

Spinoza himself, when he started out as independent thinker and as initiator of modern Bible criticism, seized at once the cardinal contradiction in Judaism, the contradiction between the monotheistic and universal God and the setting in which that God appears in the Jewish religion—as a God attached to one people only; the contradiction between the universal God and his "chosen people." You know what the realization of this contradiction brought upon Spinoza: banishment from the Jewish community and excommunication. He had to fight against the Jewish clergy which, having itself recently been a victim of the Inquisition, was infected with the spirit of the Inquisition. Then he had to face the hostility of the Catholic clergy and Calvinistic priests. All his life was a struggle to overcome the limitations of the religions and cultures of his time.

Among Jews of great intellect exposed to the corradiation of various religions and cultures some were so torn by contradictory influences and pressures that they could not find spiritual balance and broke down. One of these was Uriel Acosta, Spinoza's elder and forerunner. Many times he rebelled against Judaism; and many times he recanted. The rabbis excommunicated him repeatedly; and repeatedly he prostrated himself before them on the floor of the Amsterdam Synagogue. Spinoza had the great intellectual happiness of being able to harmonize the conflicting influences and to create out of them a higher outlook on the world and an integrated philosophy.

Almost in every generation, whenever the Jewish intellectual,

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placed at the concatenation of various cultures, struggles with himself and with the problems of his time, we find someone who, like Uriel Acosta, breaks down under the burden, and someone who, like Spinoza, makes of that burden the wings of his greatness. Heine was in a sense the Uriel Acosta of a later age. His relation to Marx, Spinoza's intellectual grandson, is comparable to Uriel Acosta's relation to Spinoza.

Heine was torn between Christianity and Jewry, and between France and Germany. In his native Rhineland there clashed the influences of the French Revolution and of the Napoleonic Empire with those of the old Holy Roman Empire of the German Kaisers. He grew up within the orbit of classical German philosophy and within the orbit of French republicanism; and he saw Kant as a Robespierre and Fichte as a Napoleon in the realm of the spirit; and so he describes them in one of the most profound and beautiful passages of *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland*. In his later years he came in contact with French and German socialism and communism; and he met Marx with that apprehensive admiration and sympathy with which Acosta had met Spinoza.

Marx likewise grew up in the Rhineland. His parents having ceased to be Jews, he did not struggle with the Jewish heritage as Heine did. All the more intense was his opposition to the social and spiritual backwardness of contemporary Germany. An exile most of his life, his thought was shaped by German philosophy, French socialism, and English political economy. In no other contemporary mind did such diverse and great influences meet so fruitfully. Marx rose above German philosophy, French socialism, and English political economy; he absorbed what was best in each of these trends and transcended the limitations of each.

To come nearer to our time: Rosa Luxemburg, Trotsky and Freud—every one of them was formed amid historic crosscurrents. Rosa Luxemburg is a unique blend of the German, Polish and Russian characters and of the Jewish temperament; Trotsky was the pupil of a Lutheran Russo-German Gymnasium in cosmopolitan Odessa on the fringe of the Greek-Orthodox Empire of the Tsars; and Freud's mind matured in Vienna in estrangement from Jewry and in opposition to the Catholic clericalism of the Habsburg capital. All of them had this in common: that the very conditions in which

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they lived and worked did not allow them to reconcile themselves to ideas which were nationally or religiously limited and induced them to strive for a universal *Weltanschauung*.

II

Spinoza's ethics were no longer the Jewish ethics, but the ethics of man at large—just as his God was no longer the Jewish God: his God, merged with nature, shed his separate and distinctive divine identity. Yet, in a way, Spinoza's God and ethics were still Jewish, only his was the Jewish monotheism carried to its logical conclusion and the Jewish universal God thought out to the end; and once he had been thought out to the end, he ceased to be Jewish.

Heine wrestled with Jewry all his life; his attitude towards it was characteristically ambivalent, full of love-hate or hate-love. He was in this respect inferior to Spinoza who, excommunicated by the Jews, did not become a Christian. Heine did not have Spinoza's strength of mind and character; and he lived in a society which even in the first decades of the nineteenth century was still more backward than Dutch society had been in the seventeenth. At first he pinned his hopes on that pseudo-emancipation of Jews, the ideal of which Moses Mendelsohn had expressed in the words: "Be a Jew inside your home and a man outside." The timidity of that German-Jewish ideal was of a piece with the paltry Liberalism of the gentile German bourgeoisie: the German Liberal was a "free man" inside his home, and an *allertreuester Untertane* outside. This could not satisfy Heine for long. He abandoned Jewry and surrendered to Christianity in order to obtain an "entry ticket to European culture." At heart he was never reconciled to the abandonment and the conversion. His rejection of Jewish orthodoxy runs through the whole of his work. His Don Isaac says to the Rabbi von Bacherach: "I could not be one of you. I like your cooking much better than I like your religion. No, I could not be one of you; and I suspect that even at the best of times, under the rule of your King David, in the best of your times, I would have run away from you and gone to the temples of Assyria and Babylon which were full of the love and the joy of life." Yet, it was a fiery and resentful Jew who had, in *An Edom*, *"gewaltig beschworen den tausendjäehrigen Schmerz."*

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Marx, about twenty years younger, surmounted the problem which tormented Heine. Only once did he come to grips with it, in his youthful and famous *Zur Judenfrage*. This was his unreserved rejection of Jewry. Apologists of Jewish orthodoxy and Jewish nationalism have because of it severely attacked Marx as an "anti-Semite." Yet, I think that Marx went to the very heart of the matter when he said that Jewry had survived "not in spite of history but in history and through history," that it owed its survival to the distinctive role that the Jews had played as agents of a money economy in environments which lived in a natural economy, that Judaism was essentially a theological epitome of market-relationships and the faith of the merchant; and that Christian Europe, as it developed from feudalism to capitalism, became Jewish in a sense. Marx saw Christ as the "theorizing Jew," the Jew as a "practical Christian" and, therefore, the "practical" bourgeois Christian as a "Jew." Since he treated Judaism as the religious reflection of the bourgeois way of thought, he saw bourgeois Europe as becoming assimilated to Jewry. His ideal was not the equality of Jew and Gentile in a "Judaized" capitalist society, but the emancipation of Jew and non-Jew alike from the bourgeois way of life, or, as he put it provocatively in his somewhat over-paradoxical Young-Hegelian idiom, in the "emancipation of society from Jewry." His idea was as universal as Spinoza's yet advanced in time by two hundred years—it was the idea of socialism and of the classless and stateless society.

Among Marx's many disciples and followers hardly any were, in spirit and temperament, as close to him as Rosa Luxemburg and Leon Trotsky. Their affinity with him shows itself in their dialectically dramatic vision of the world and of its class struggles and in that exceptional concord of thought, passion and imagination which gives to their language and style a peculiar clarity, density and richness. (Bernard Shaw had probably these qualities in mind when he spoke of Marx's "peculiarly Jewish literary gifts.") Like Marx, Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky strove, together with their non-Jewish comrades, for the universal, as against the particularist, and for the internationalist, as against the nationalist solutions of the problems of their time. Rosa Luxemburg sought to transcend the contradiction between the German reformist socialism and the Russian revolutionary Marxism. She sought to inject into German socialism something

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of the Russian and Polish revolutionary *élan* and idealism, something of that "revolutionary romanticism" which so great a realist as Lenin unabashingly extolled; and occasionally she tried to transplant the Western European democratic spirit and tradition into the socialist underground movements of Eastern Europe. She failed in her main purpose and paid with her life. But not only she paid for it. In her assassination Hohenzollern Germany celebrated its last triumph and Nazi Germany—its first.

Trotsky, the author of Permanent Revolution, had before him the vision of a global upheaval transforming mankind. The leader, together with Lenin, of the Russian revolution and the founder of the Red Army, he came in conflict with the State he had helped to create when that State and its leaders put up the banner of socialism in one country. Not for him was the limitation of the vision of socialism to the boundaries of one country.

All these great revolutionaries were extremely vulnerable. They were as Jews, rootless, in a sense; but they were so only in some respects, for they had the deepest roots in intellectual tradition and in the noblest aspirations of their times. Yet, whenever religious intolerance or nationalist emotion was on the ascendant, whenever dogmatic narrowmindedness and fanaticism triumphed, they were the first victims. They were excommunicated by Jewish rabbis; they were persecuted by Christian priests; they were hunted down by the gendarmes of absolute rulers and by the soldateska; they were hated by pseudo-democratic philistines; and they were expelled by their own parties. Nearly all of them were exiled from their countries; and the writings of all were burned at the stake at one time or another. Spinoza's name could not be mentioned for over a century after his death—even Leibnitz, who was indebted to Spinoza for so much of his thought, did not dare to mention it. Trotsky is still under anathema in Russia today. The names of Marx, Heine, Freud, and Rosa Luxemburg were forbidden in Germany quite recently. But theirs is the ultimate victory. After a century during which Spinoza's name was covered with oblivion they put up monuments to him and acknowledged him as the greatest fructifier of the human mind. Herder once said about Goethe: "I wish Goethe read some Latin books apart from Spinoza's *Ethics*." Goethe was indeed steeped in Spinoza's thought; and Heine rightly describes him as "Spinoza who

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has shed the cloak of his geometrical-mathematical formulae and stands before us as lyrical poet." Heine himself has triumphed over Hitler and Goebbels. The other revolutionaries of this line will also survive and sooner or later triumph over those who have worked hard to efface their memory.

I am afraid I have said very little about Freud. But it is obvious why he belongs to the same intellectual line. In his teachings, whatever their merits and demerits, he transcends the limitations of earlier psychological schools. The man whom he analyzes is not a German or an Englishman, a Russian or a Jew—it is the universal man in whom the subconscious and the conscious struggle, the man who is part of nature and part of society, the man whose desires and cravings, scruples and inhibitions, anxieties and predicaments are essentially the same no matter to what race, religion or nation he belongs. From their viewpoint the Nazis were right when they coupled Freud's name with Marx's and burned the books of both.

III

All these thinkers and revolutionaries have had certain philosophical principles in common, although their philosophies vary, of course, from century to century and from generation to generation. They are all, from Spinoza to Freud, determinists. They all hold that the universe is ruled by laws inherent in it and governed by *Gesetzmässigkeiten*. They do not see reality as a jumble of accidents or history as an assemblage of caprices and whims of rulers. There is nothing fortuitous, so Freud tells us, in our dreams, follies, and even in our slips of the tongue. The laws of development, Trotsky says, "refract" themselves through accidents; and in saying this he is very close to Spinoza.

They are determinists all because, having watched many societies and studied many "ways of life" at close quarters, they grasp the basic regularities of life. Their manner of thinking is dialectical, because, living on borderlines of nations and religions, they see society in a state of flux. They conceive reality as being dynamic, not static. Those who are shut in within one society, one nation, or one religion, tend to imagine that their way of life and their way of thought have absolute and unchangeable validity and that all that

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contradicts their standards is somehow "unnatural," inferior, or evil. Those, on the other hand, who live on the borderlines of various civilizations comprehend more clearly the great movement and the great contradictoriness of nature and society.

All these thinkers agree on the relativity of moral standards. None of them believes in absolute good and absolute evil. They all observed communities adhering to different moral standards and different ethical values. What was good to the Roman Catholic Inquisition, under which Spinoza's grandparents had lived, was evil to Jews; and what was good to the rabbis and Jewish elders of Amsterdam was evil to Spinoza himself. Heine and Marx experienced in their youth the tremendous clash between the morality of the French revolution and that of feudal Germany.

Nearly all these thinkers have yet another great philosophical idea in common—the idea that knowledge to be real must be active. This incidentally had a bearing on their views on ethics, for if knowledge is inseparable from action or *Praxis,* which is by its nature relative and self-contradictory, then morality, the knowledge of what is good and what is evil, is also inseparable from *Praxis* and is also relative and self-contradictory. It was Spinoza who said that "to be is to do and to know is to do." It was only one step from this to Marx's saying that "hitherto the philosophers have interpreted the world; henceforth the task is to change it."

Finally, all these men, from Spinoza to Freud, believed in the ultimate solidarity of men; and this was implicit in their attitudes towards Jewry. We are now looking back on these believers in humanity through the bloody fog of our times. We are looking back at them through the smoke of the gas chambers, the smoke which no wind can really disperse from our eyes. These "non-Jewish Jews" were essentially optimists; and their optimism reached heights which it is not easy to ascend in our times. They did not imagine that it would be possible for "civilized" Europe in the twentieth century to sink to a depth of barbarity at which the mere words "solidarity of men" would sound as a perverse mockery to Jewish ears. Alone among them Heine had the poet's intuitive premonition of this when he warned Europe to beware of the coming onslaught of the old Germanic gods emerging *"aus dem teutschem Urwalde,"* and when he complained that the destiny of the modern Jew is tragic beyond ex-

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pression and comprehension—so tragic that "they laugh at you when you speak of it, and this is the greatest tragedy of all."

We do not find this premonition in Spinoza or Marx. Freud in his old age reeled mentally under the blow of Nazism. To Trotsky it came as a shock that Stalin used against him the anti-Semitic innuendo. As a young man Trotsky had, in most categorical terms, repudiated the demand for Jewish "cultural autonomy" which the Bund, the Jewish Socialist Party, raised in 1903. He did it in the name of the solidarity of Jew and non-Jew in the socialist camp. Nearly a quarter of a century later, while he was engaged in an unequal struggle with Stalin and went to the party cells in Moscow to expound his views, he was met there with vicious allusions to his Jewishness and even with plain anti-Semitic insults. The allusions and insults came from members of the party which he had, together with Lenin, led in the revolution and the civil war. In Trotsky's archives I have found a letter which he wrote about this to Bukharin in 1926. He described the scenes in the Moscow organization and asked: "Is it possible . . ."—and you can feel in the words and in his underscorings the anguish, the astonishment and the horror of the man—"is it possible that *in our party, in workers' cells, here in Moscow,* people should use anti-Semitic insults with impunity? Is it possible?" With the same astonishment and anguish he asked the same question at a session of the Politbureau, where his colleagues shrugged him off and pooh-poohed the matter. After another quarter of a century, and after Auschwitz and Majdanek and Belsen, Trotsky's question had to be asked anew when once again, this time much more openly and menacingly, Stalin resorted to the anti-Semitic innuendo and insult.

IV

It is an indubitable fact that the Nazi massacre of six million European Jews has not made any deep impression on the nations of Europe. It has not truly shocked their conscience. It has left them almost cold. Was then the optimistic belief in humanity voiced by the great Jewish revolutionaries justified? Can we still share their faith in the future of civilization? I admit that if one were to try and answer these questions from an exclusively Jewish standpoint it would be hard, perhaps impossible, to give a positive answer. As to myself, I cannot approach the issue from an exclusively Jewish

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standpoint; and my answer is: Yes, their faith was justified. It was justified in so far, at any rate, as the belief in the ultimate solidarity of mankind is itself one of the conditions necessary for the preservation of humanity and for the cleansing of our civilization of the dregs of barbarity that are still present in it and poison it.

Why then has the fate of the European Jews left the nations of Europe, or the gentile world at large, almost cold? Unfortunately, Marx was far more right about the place of the Jews in European society than we could realize some time ago. The major part of the Jewish tragedy has consisted in this, that in result of a long historic development, the masses of Europe have become accustomed to identify the Jew primarily with trade and jobbing, money lending and money making. Of these the Jew had become the synonym and the symbol to the popular mind. Look up the Oxford English Dictionary and see how it gives the accepted meanings of the term "Jew": firstly, it is a "person of Hebrew race"; secondly—this is the colloquial use—an "extortionate usurer, driver of hard bargains." "Rich as a Jew" says the proverb. Colloquially the word is also used as a transitive verb: to jew, the Oxford Dictionary tells us, means "to cheat, overreach." This is the vulgar image of the Jew and the vulgar prejudice against him, fixed in many languages, not only in English, and in many works of art, not only in the *Merchant of Venice*.

However, this is not only the vulgar image. Remember what was the occasion on which Macaulay pleaded, and the manner in which he pleaded for political equality of Jew and Gentile and for the Jew's right to sit in the House of Commons. The occasion was the admission to the House of a Rothschild, the first Jew to sit in the House, the Jew elected as Member for the City of London. And Macaulay's argument was this: If we allow the Jew to manage our financial affairs for us, why should we not allow him to sit among us here, in Parliament, and have a say in the management of all our public affairs? This was the voice of the bourgeois Christian who took a fresh look at Shylock and hailed him as brother.

I suggest that what had enabled the Jews to survive as a separate community, the fact that they had represented the market economy amidst people living in a natural economy—that this fact and its popular memories have also been responsible, at least in part, for the *Schadenfreude* or the indifference with which the populace

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of Europe has witnessed the holocaust of the Jews. It has been the misfortune of the Jews that, when the nations of Europe turned against capitalism they did so only very superficially, at any rate in the first half of this century. They attacked not the core of capitalism, not its productive relationships, not its organization of property and labor, but its externals and its largely archaic trappings which so often were indeed Jewish.

Had the peoples of Europe remained attached to capitalism they would not have spent their frustration and fury on the Jew, the traditional and, in the main, primitive agent of the money economy. Had they, on the other hand, risen against capitalism seriously, they would have overthrown it and would not have found scapegoats in Jewish shopkeepers and peddlers. It was because the peoples had turned against capitalism only in a half-hearted and half-witted manner that they turned against the Jews. Babel once said that "anti-Semitism is the socialism of the fools." The masses of Europe have been socialist enough to accept the socialism of the fools but not wise enough to embrace socialism.

This is the crux of the Jewish tragedy. Marx and Rosa Luxemburg imagined that mankind would pass from capitalism to socialism before it had degenerated culturally through remaining too long under the sway and spell of capitalism. They had imagined that mankind would make its exit from capitalism in good and civilized form. This has not happened. Decaying capitalism has overstayed its day and has morally dragged down mankind; and we, the Jews, have paid for it and may yet have to pay for it.

All this has driven the Jews to see their own State as *the* way out. Most of the great revolutionaries, whose heritage I am discussing, have seen the ultimate solution to the problems of their and our times not in nation-states but in international society. As Jews they were the natural pioneers of this idea, for who was as well qualified to preach the international society of equals as were Jews free from all Jewish and non-Jewish orthodoxy and nationalism? However, the decay of bourgeois Europe has compelled the Jew to embrace the nation-state. This is the paradoxical consummation of the Jewish tragedy. It is paradoxical, because we live in an age when the nation-state is fast becoming an archaism—not only the nation-state of Israel but the nation-states of Russia, the United States, Great Britain,

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France, Germany and others. They are all anachronisms. Do you not see it yet? Do you not see that when atomic energy daily reduces the globe in size, when man starts out on his inter-planetary journey, when a sputnik flies over the territory of a great nation-state in a minute or in seconds, that at such a time technology renders the nation-state as ridiculous and outlived as medieval little princedoms were in the age of the steam engine.

Even those young nation-states that have come into being as the result of a necessary and progressive struggle waged by colonial and semi-colonial peoples for emancipation—India, Burma, Ghana, and others—cannot, in my view, preserve their progressive character for long. They form a necessary stage in the history of some peoples; but it is a stage that those peoples too will have to overcome in order to find wider frameworks for their existence. In our epoch any new nation-state, soon after its constitution, begins to be affected by the general decline of this form of political organization; and this is already showing itself in the short experience of India, Ghana and Israel. The world has compelled the Jew to embrace the nation-state and to make of it his pride and hope just at a time when there is little or no hope left in it. You cannot blame the Jews for this; you must blame the world. But Jews should at least be aware of the paradox and realize that their intense enthusiasm for "national sovereignty" is historically belated. They did not benefit from the advantages of the nation-state in those centuries when it was a medium of mankind's advance and a great revolutionary and unifying factor in history. They have taken possession of it only after it has become a factor of disunity and social disintegration.

I hope, therefore, that, together with other nations, the Jews will ultimately become aware—or regain the awareness—of the inadequacy of the nation-state and that they will find their way back to the moral and political heritage that the genius of the Jews who have gone beyond Jewry has left us—the message of a universal human emancipation.

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Harold Rosenberg

ROADSIDE ARCADIA

The small town is the stage set of The American Dream. Even for the city-born the good life waits in a community with a village look. There the success drama (enacted elsewhere) reaches its fairy tale epilogue, in which the hero wins place and recognition in the bosom of The Folks.

Fantasy of a nation of immigrants and wanderers, the dream small town has not weakened its hold in the steady movement of population from the countryside to the cities and suburbs during the past twenty years. On the contrary, the more people quit the rural setting, and the more the small town itself sheds its original character, the brighter glows the imaginary treasure left behind on the porch. I do not hesitate to link with the increasing depletion of the small town America's new fear of white-collar masses, organization men, consumption-dazed housewives nudged by hidden persuaders, social-climbing children oversensitive to the cues of taste leaders. With the country virtues fading, what but machines will human beings turn into? The Orgamerican Fantasy is the recoil into nightmare of The American Dream, with its idyll of neighborliness, naturalness, individuality and face-to-face dealing. An Arcadia of solid folks and an apocalypse of robotism are the poles of the contemporary American social imagination.

America's small-town craving is both prophetic and pathological. Through it the United States undergoes in advance of other countries the longings, regrets and despairs of an epoch of transformation in which peoples everywhere have begun to break apart and enter into motion. Cleansed of the evils of historical communities, the village of The American Dream preserves the warm heart and extended hand of pioneer caravans and of settlements on the edge of the world. As a social ideal it is a model of generous moods and relations which the future must copy: in it classes and rank have vanished, manners are plain and direct, sociability and hospitality are taken for granted, contribution to the common good is the only measure. The order of the small town

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sustains the freedom of the uprooted individual while restoring his heritage of basic human sentiments.

At the same time, however, the small-town idea locks the American mind in opposition to its own vanguard experience as the originator of new social powers and possibilities. Under its influence the builders of cosmopolis live in suspicion of the city and a nation of technicians and organizers kowtows to the inanities of "grassroots."

Repelling the radical implications of American practice, the nostalgia for the village weakens the nation by forcing every policy to come to terms with the rural pretense. Second thought of people who *have* migrated—their first was for what works—it transforms the American Dream into a reverie of seclusion and rest that cannot fail to affect as reactionary peoples in other continents who are just starting out. Thus, for all its actual innovations, America plays a part against itself in the revolutionary drama of the century.

To enrich The American Dream with an historical self-consciousness and the conception of a new human scale, the fiction of the small town must be dissolved. Instead, there is systematically erected upon it The American Lie. A ceaseless propaganda exploits the floating sentiment for the recaptured community to consecrate the American small town as the habitation of a unified and contented Folk in exclusive possession of the secrets of "real life." Defending these verities against big-city artifice and subversive ideas, The American Lie replaces the ambiguities of The American Dream with a rigid ideology and solidifies its delusions into a code of mass-belief.

The power of this process is comically demonstrated in Spectorsky's account in *The Exurbanites* of how the professionals who fabricate the glamor of the whistle-stop Utopias are themselves seduced by it into a charade of tractors and split rail fences. A still greater triumph of The Lie is its ability to delude actual small-towners into mistaking their villages for Cocagne and mimicking themselves as Maw and Paw. Daydreams of being King For A Day at the Waldorf do not disturb their conviction that compared with the satisfactions of Court House Square the delights of the city are tinsel.

In any case, there is no American so sophisticated or so simple that there is not laid out in his conscience an illusory village where he stands trial for the superficiality, egotism and eccentricity of modern existence. To demolish this bogus agrarian authority is one of the first tasks of intellectual liberation; but one much more difficult to accomplish today than in the time of Mencken and *Main Street* when America's small towns still had body.

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You get a sense of the resistance of the present-day rural myth in *Small Town In Mass Society* by Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman.[1] *Small Town* is a grimmer tale and a truer one than Whyte's *Organization Man* or Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*. Each of the last two composed an image which swallowed up its facts; *Small Town* takes its subject's image of itself and places alongside it the reality that image is designed to hide. The themes of Whyte and Riesman were carried along by their rhetoric; Vidich and Bensman deny any thesis and stumble along in the non-language that passes for a normal vocabulary among the pros of social investigation; when they hit their most telling points their prose seems to turn in on itself and becomes even thicker than usual as if it were trying to camouflage its content. *Small Town* will never reach the best seller lists; caricature, however, is one thing, social criticism something else.

Vidich and Bensman begin with the lie of the small town in the small town and end by showing how this lie drives everyone there crazy ("externalization of the self"). Their chief distinction as sociologists is their sense of mirage. "Springdale," the town in upper New York State they have chosen to rake over (I am reminded of Jules Romains' *Les Copains,* in which a band of French intellectuals comically wrecked their version—how different from ours!—of such a town), is a spot on the side of the traffic lanes. Once you notice it, you see "the image of the typical New England town: a well-kept, clean, neat place; a small shopping center; white colonial style, freshly painted houses, interspersed with houses of each of the architectural eras up to the ranch house. One cannot escape the impression of the small town with one main street that has largely escaped the general hustle and turmoil of American life. . . . The beauty of the village rests on a picturesque stream. . . ."

The correspondence of Springdale physically to the dream setting of the movies and the ads is perfect. So is that of the Springdale mentality to the accepted "copy" concerning country fresh air, the comradeship of neighbors, the corruption of the cities and the probity of "just plain folks." It is only when you have been brought inside the picture that the town breaks down into a nasty little hive of smugness, greed, conniving, gossip, self-enslavement, sloth, pettiness, frustration and hopelessness.

Classless, indigenous, independent, unified Springdale is dominated by its class of "rational" farmers (those applying the latest production

1. Princeton University Press. $6.00.

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and marketing methods), most of whom are Poles and almost all newcomers, who keep themselves and their families so geared around the clock to what it takes to make a profit under the state's milk-price formula and the changing cost of feed that "social activities and participation, except in churches, play no or only a minor part" in their lives, though the foreigners do try when they get the chance to shine up to the older inhabitants, "the Americans."

Next to these prosperous farmers stand the storekeepers, a broken-backed breed of businessmen who have never recovered from The Depression and the ever-increasing competition of out-of-town supermarkets, and who jump to the whistle of the mass distributors who fix their costs and selling prices; to stay in their losing game these folks work themselves and their wives far into the night in the conviction, unscarred by war, bankruptcy or boom, that success, like virtue, is the reward of hard labor. As to their sociability, "in their relations with each other, the businessmen are highly suspicious and distrustful," and if you have ever lived in a small town you know how they feel about their customers who drive off on Saturday to the cut-rate stores.

It is characteristic of contemporary myths that such unity as does exist in Springdale is largely the work of the small segment of professionals who, believing in it as an ideal, stick their noses into everything ("plan and execute most of the community's non-political organizational life") and "are the functionaries who run the town." Actually, however, these loyal lawyers and druggists tend to be petty snobs, with an exclusive "book club" for their wives, though without the courage to stand openly against "the public ideology of equality."

The rest of the populace consists of a few skilled industrial workers employed outside the town and having little to do with it; persons (about 25%) who have failed to make it as farmers, businessmen or artisans but who, as best they can, keep up with these classes in respectability and kitchen appliances; a scattering of nuts whose "activities lead to their social isolation"; old inhabitants who "seclude themselves" out of a sense of superiority; "traditional farmers" who work their land the old-fashioned way and who are "socially isolated from the rest of the community."

The only element with any human appeal is "the shack people," rural Bohemians who live on the outskirts of town, don't give a damn about its standards or self-delusions, take jobs when they need cash, and spend the rest of their time hunting, fishing and getting drunk; these genuine countrysiders are "the object of universal derision in Springdale, a declassed group." To the others they personify the social void

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that lies in wait for those who fail to keep up with their various levels of "stylized consumption."

Half of Springdale live from hand to mouth, the other half are misers: the well-to-do farmer because he plows back every cent into expanding his "plant," the storekeeper because he exists by the pennies he shaves off his fixed costs, the traditional farmer because he learned to be a skinflint in the cradle, the "old aristocrat" because he's hoarding his inheritance. The only subjective unity Springdale achieves, apart from the common lie about itself, is in its policy of "don't spend a cent if you can help it." Never paying for itself, the town sponges off the state for its roads and its school system, its two largest expenses. We, of the city, pay for Springdale—I'd rather give my dollar to the devil—but this is no more than just, considering the gas-shells of delusion we lob into the place daily in order to confuse its inhabitants and keep them there.

"A central fact of rural life is its dependence on the institutions and dynamics of urban and mass society." That in all important respects Springdale is controlled from the outside and has no power to decide its actions—this futility of disagreement conspires with the universal niggardliness to perpetuate the fiction of unanimity that paralyzes the brains of its citizens. *Small Town* examines in detail the limited conflicts that underlie this fiction and how the lid is kept on them by the operations of a sham democracy. Three men constitute "the invisible government" of Springdale and settle in advance what each meeting of each town and village board shall resolve. The same hands have picked the candidates and propelled the voters to the polls; placed some in town jobs, fired others out of them; chosen the committees to run the town's social events and collect its charities—all without controversy and with a show of spontaneous public decision.

The single area where conflict might be worth while, and where it constantly threatens to break out, is school politics, since the school's quarter-of-a-million dollar budget makes it the major industry of Springdale and pork barrel for feeding relatives who can sweep, teach, drive buses or make the furnace, as well as a prime target for food suppliers, contractors and sellers of acreage. "No year passes without the occurrence of a crisis . . . and this leads to further demands of unanimity and concealment." Here The American Lie plays its part in holding issues to the scale of triviality. Farmers who manage their lives by the latest manual of the Department of Agriculture cite the need to "perpetuate the rural tradition" in crushing resistance to useless courses in farm training; and under the same obsession preference is given to

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the teacher with a farm background. Even the principal, an outside "expert," grovels before the common image and piously presents his offering of corn [this precious term reveals the degree to which "rural" and "fake" have become synonymous]: "Our many pleasant memories of a childhood on the farm," drools this blood brother of a collective farm leader, "color our thinking to the point where we have little sympathy with urban living."

Having taken The Lie upon himself, the school principal adds progressivism to the arsenal for subduing conflict. Without disturbing the common illusion, he bores from within the PTA to plant his liberal ideas among its members as if they had thought of them themselves: then uses the PTA to bore from within the school board in behalf of the same ideas. If PTA gets too heated in favor of the new program he holds it back; if his ideas don't go over with the board he pretends he was always opposed to them. "Through the operation of such intricate processes, Peabody has succeeded in instituting a number of his ideas: hiring a professional cafeteria manager to replace a local person and introducing several new courses."

For the sake of such puny benefits, the American small town, like any ant hill ridden by a superstition, has to put up with, and even be thankful for, this hypocritical priest of "progress," whose victories rest on translating "sex" into "health," and who deludes people into thinking they are thinking when they repeat the cliches of watered-down social science.

Peabody fools everybody. But only because they need him to fool them. Between the dream small town and the real mass society he introduces a gelatinous sheath of compromise under which daily life is amended while leaving the myth unscratched. This underhand way of accomodating collective life to new situations without open declaration or battle is the source of American conformism.

Peabody also fools nobody. The PTA resents him, Vidich and Bensman report, the teachers dislike and distrust him and a member of "the invisible government" whom he has won over has put the finger on him as "a little too inhuman—has never got into anything in the town. He's good for Springdale until he gets things straightened out. Then we'll have to get rid of him." Condemned by the dream for which he has testified, Peabody is the stuff that "people's court" defendants are made of.

Though Vidich and Bensman deny seeking "solutions" for Springdale, I suspect them of regarding Peabody as a hero. If this suspicion is correct—"Life," they conclude in deadpan, "consists in making an

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adjustment that is as satisfactory as possible within a world which is not often tractable to basic wishes and desires"—if Peabody represents to them the hope of Springdale, Vidich and Bensman might as well have advised Sodom and Gomorrah to institute classes in interpersonal relations. Condemned by its vices of falsehood, boredom and pointlessness, Springdale deserves to disappear and no doubt will. Or, if this is not to be its fate, other men must appear there than those described in *Small Town*'s groupings, and these can emerge only by tearing apart Springdale's fetters of belief. What the town needs is not better cafeteria management but struggle, the fiercer the better. Without a war banner, the few dissenters noted in *Small Town*—a couple of ministers, a school teacher—turn into Peabodys or take their place as harmless oddities, intellectual equivalents of the shack people.

As the reward of their unity, the citizens of Springdale are in bad shape. "Adhering to publicly stated values while at the same time facing the necessity of acting in immediate situations places a strain on the psychological make-up of the person." They have gained the terrain of The American Dream but lack the means of laying hold of its promise. Each social layer has its own way of giving up and going to pieces. As for the town as a whole, it "simply adjusts to mechanisms which are seen only dimly and rarely understood. . . . Indeed because of the experience of war, depression, unemployment and an uncertain dairy market, almost the entire community is sensitized to the underlying forces which create the chasm between objective realities and socially stylized illusions."

You may find it hard to take the socioterminorororhetorical rag of "sensitized to the underlying forces which create the chasm." But the Springdale credo which *Small Town* repeats near the end is more than compensation. I hereby proffer it in slightly versified form as an incantation to be chanted every Saturday afternoon at 2 P.M. in front of the A & P under the leadership of the ladies selling raffle tickets on the twotone Chrysler hardtop for the benefit of the L.V.I.S.

Springdale is a wholesome friendly place
The best place to bring up children
Made up of ordinary people, just folks
Trying to make their community a better place
To live. Nobody here has to worry
About having friends, all you have to do
Is be friendly yourself. No problems are too big
For Springdale it's the outsiders that cause all the trouble.
People here have a lot of community spirit

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You can always get people to take part
But the busiest people are the most reliable.
Nobody is excluded this is a democratic town.
Anybody who tries to run things gets pushed down
But fast. If you join clubs you can learn things.
Everybody was invited and fun was had by all.

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Norman Podhoretz

THE NEW NIHILISM AND THE NOVEL

If you take a random sampling of novels published over the past few months, what strikes you most forcibly is the remarkable degree to which writers, both here and in various European countries, have again become preoccupied—though in a different key and a new perspective—with the theme of the loss of values. In America, at least, the deep concern with this theme that informed almost every poem and novel of the modernist movement became for a time either incomprehensible or boring (which, when we are talking about attitudes as expressed in works of art, amounts to much the same thing)—and with good cause. First of all, the modernist movement had exhausted itself by the mid 1940's: the avant-garde in literature was dead, and the few experimental writers who remained were able to bring no fresh life to the attitudes of the movement. It is this, and not a mere deficiency of technical ingenuity, that explains why such writers daringly continued to repeat experiments so revolutionary that they were already on the reading lists of freshman survey courses in English literature. Concern over the loss of values became a received idea, a cliché, and the best anyone could do with it was to trot out mechanical symbolic allusions; only a scholar with the statistical thoroughness of Miss Caroline Spurgeon would have the stamina to tabulate the number of deserts, rats, ruined mansions and the like that have cropped up in the last ten or fifteen years of American writing. Beyond this, however, the whole question of the loss of values was soon removed from the hands of the literary men who had raised it in the first place and given over to the tender embraces of the theologians, thus turning what had been a "nonsectarian" diagnosis of the spiritual condition of modern man into a point of doctrinal contention between "humanists" and "religionists." Not that the literary men offered any great resistance to this usurpation, for the terms in which some of them had posed the prob-

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lem led inevitably (or so it appears today) to a religious solution. If God is dead—as Nietzsche had proclaimed—and his death (with all that the metaphor implies) has rendered life intolerable—as Kafka and Lawrence and Eliot went on to say—why, then, He must be speedily resurrected. Eliot, in his best disingenuous manner, once complained that when *For Launcelot Andrewes* appeared, a reviewer "made it the occasion for what I can only describe as a flattering obituary notice . . . he pointed out that I had suddenly arrested my progress—whither he had supposed me to be moving I do not know—and that to his distress I was unmistakably making off in the wrong direction." (On which one is tempted to comment, "Well said, old mole! canst work i'th' earth so fast?") We all know whither Eliot's early admirers had *not* supposed him to be moving, but at any rate the direction he himself took was representative of the direction taken by the attitudes toward modernity that animated the great literary flowering in which he played so prominent a role. When the theologians stepped in—and they stepped in gleefully, announcing that the poets had borne eloquent confessional witness to the disasters of the flight from religion—the voice of the spiritual engineer was bound to drown out the voices crying from the wilderness. And so it did. The prophet had said: "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world, / . . . . / The best lack all conviction, while the worst / Are full of passionate intensity." And the priest (in the words of Professor Stanley Romaine Hopper) answered: " . . . there are many otherwise creditable (and even distinguished) literary people whose knowledge of what is taking place in theology today is almost sublimely unenlightened. Their creative works are therefore legitimate but uninformed fumbling after solutions to problems of the spirit, works which could have been more efficiently ordered and more accurately construed had the author or the artist been working within the framework of a well articulated world-view."

Once this emphasis was established, the theme of the loss of values suffered debasement into a strictly polemical device for attacking the secularizing forces at work in Western civilization—science, industrialism, and liberal democracy. And having shrunk from being the vital expression of the consciousness of an age to the status of a plank in the platform of the Church party, the theme could no longer serve the uses of a living literature. Moreover, this hitching of the responsibility for having brought death into the world and all our woes on science, industrialism, and liberal democracy was badly timed, coming as it did to a head precisely at a moment when everyone (soldiers to a man in the Cold War) was busily engaged in rediscovering the values latent

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in the "American way of life." True, there was, and is, a great deal of blabbering about the religious foundations of Western civilization on the one hand and "godless Communism" on the other, as though the conflict between the democratic West and the totalitarian East were at bottom a struggle between faith and atheism. But the most energetic intellectual impulse of the period was pushing toward the idea that the main enemy, both in culture and politics, was the "true believer," the fanatic of whatever complexion, the prisoner of ideology. This being so, the loss of values could be seen as a positive virtue, a symptom of our progressive liberation from rigid systems of belief. What we in the West stood for was the skeptical empiricist temperament, the very temperament that makes for a healthy political system (since it discourages fanaticism), a prosperous economic life (since it is the basis of technological efficiency), and a flourishing culture (since concreteness is the soul of art). Something of the elation you find in the early defenders of natural philosophy like Bacon and Spratt was in the American air for a few years at the discovery that the whole liberal-humanist complex contained within itself an answer to those who were attacking it for being incompatible with the good life. And Lionel Trilling was there to tell us that the progressives in our midst had betrayed the liberal tradition by perverting it into an ideology. The old battle between the rationalist and the empiricist philosophers was lustily being fought again, and thinkers as diverse as Hannah Arendt, Hans J. Morgenthau, Michael Polanyi, and George Kennan were providing (in some instances inadvertently) arguments from every corner for a crusade against the rationalists of today (i.e. the ideologists). The upshot, so far as American youth was concerned, was not that we had lost our values, but only our taste for ideology, and good riddance to it. Our values were implicit in the complexities of our behavior from day to day; they were not the kind that could easily be systematized and translated into slogans to compete with the slogans of the Communists for the "uncommitted minds" of the world: here lay the source of our weakness in the Cold War, but also of the moral superiority of our position. It was because the sociologists, led by David Riesman, were doing more than anyone else to confirm this proposition, to uncover a coherent pattern in our daily behavior, that sociology became so prominent a field of study in those years.

Only one major literary effort was generated by the ethos I have been trying to describe—*The Adventures of Augie March*—and if we want to understand why the hot-blooded love affair between the intellectuals and America cooled off before it ever got to the altar, we

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can do no better than go to Mr. Bellow's celebrated novel. Both in its attempt to create a new idiom that could express the intellectual's joyous sense of connection with the common grain of American life and in its assertion that individual fulfillment is still possible in this fluid and rootless society of ours ("I may well be a flop at this line of endeavor. Columbus too thought he was a flop, probably, when they sent him back in chains, which didn't prove there was no America"), *Augie* speaks for that period, roughly between 1948 and 1955, that some have called the age of conformity and neo-Conservatism and others the era of "intellectual revisionism." But in its failures as a novel—the willed spontaneity of the writing, the abstractness of the hero—we can also detect the uncertainty and emotional strain that lurked on the underside of the new optimism. The elation in the discovery of America was indisputably sincere, but it was a temporary mood, as deceptive an indication of the feelings within as the surface texture of Mr. Bellow's prose. Not nearly enough conviction stood behind this mood to sustain it against the slow inexorable grinding of the years of atomic stalemate, the grinding and the anxiety which would not be denied. Mr. Bellow himself went on to the agonized gloom of *Seize the Day* (in my opinion the best thing he has so far written), and the rest of us dispersed on our separate ways, a few crying for a return to radicalism, a few once again hawking the wares of the church. Surely the reception accorded Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, whose work combines an appearance of radicalism with a show of intense spirituality, testifies to the hunger that has grown up on all sides for something extreme, fervent, affirmative, and sweeping; five, or even three, years ago the Beat Generation would simply not have been noticed. On another level altogether, there is the magazine *Dissent*. When you consider that it speaks largely in the tired accents of an old-fashioned central European socialism, you can only conclude that its growing influence indicates a nostalgia for the grand passions and the selfless dedication that democratic socialism once had no trouble breeding in its adherents. I imagine that many American readers of *Dissent* regard it with a kind of envy and perhaps even with humble reverence, much as a sin-stricken man in quest of religious faith might look upon the inhabitants of a monastery. And finally, there is Richard Chase's exciting book *The Democratic Vista*, the first truly relevant, if not altogether convincing, effort to redefine the need for a cultural radicalism and to argue that avant-garde attitudes are still worth passionate support. Chase is the first writer who has tried to bring the 1930's up to date, but as things are going, he will almost certainly not be the last.

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A renewed sense, then, of the loss of values is beginning to impose itself, only this time it seems to be taking the form of a recognition that in losing our taste for ideology we have also lost our capacity for passion. But though one can decide which values to defend, and though one can try on ideologies like suits of clothes, one cannot choose to be passionate. It is impossible to will oneself into powerful convictions; something from the outside has to take over the mind and spirit, has to "startle this dull pain, and make it move and live." The dilemma today is that nothing seems to be left in our world to set an honest man's feelings on fire.

Three recent novels by young American writers bear discussion in this connection as different responses to the new mood which has been developing in the past year or two. The most recalcitrant of the three, and the least interesting, is Frederick Buechner's *The Return of Ansel Gibbs,*[1] a terribly solemn little book about a patrician statesman who runs into trouble with a know-nothing midwestern senator when his appointment to a cabinet post comes up for confirmation. The contrast between Gibbs and the senator is much too crude to yield anything significant, and to make matters worse, Buechner drags in a contrived and wholly unconvincing bit of complicated business involving the hero's daughter and the son of a man for whose suicide many years earlier Gibbs still feels responsible. None of this is any good at all, but in the portrait of Ansel Gibbs himself, Buechner gets hold of something real; he handles it ineptly, but it is something real nevertheless. Gibbs is a rather stuffy and pompous man (one wonders whether Buechner is aware of the extent to which he has endowed his hero with these unattractive qualities), but he has breeding, cultivation, and intelligence (or anyway a reasonable facsimile of intelligence—the breeding and cultivation seem authentic enough). His political enemies accuse him of having once responded to the question, implausibly put to him by an irate soldier when he was in Washington during the war without a uniform, "Well, my friend, and what are you doing to save civilization?" with the calm reply, "I am civilization." Civilization, we quickly discover, means for Buechner a consciousness of the "tragic ambivalence" of life, and being civilized exerts a severe toll: Gibbs suffers from a certain deficiency of feeling, a certain remoteness from the natural processes and the elemental emotions. He is almost incapable of passion (sobriety, judiciousness, detachment, moderation, tolerance being the civilized virtues), and he can no more satisfy his old teacher's demand that he become a prophet than he can prate sentimentally like the sena-

1. Knopf. $3.75.

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tor about Mom's apple pie. The novel raises the question of whether such a man can be relied upon to guide the fortunes of others, and after making all the necessary concessions (and a few gratuitous ones as well) to the opposing camp, it answers in the affirmative. Not, mind you, a strong affirmative; only a "civilized" one, full of "tragic ambivalence."

Buechner is saying that the inability to commit oneself passionately can still be regarded as a positive value: he is on the side of those who believe in the intrinsic superiority of what I have shorthandedly called the skeptical empiricist temper. But notice how weak and defensive his tone is by comparison with the elation that accompanied this position a few years ago. "Civilization" in Buechner's sense has clearly lost the power to generate even a surface enthusiasm by now. It seems to be all played out.

George P. Elliott's first novel, *Parktilden Village*,[2] is a much better book than *The Return of Ansel Gibbs*; indeed, Elliott seems to me one of the most promising new figures to have appeared on the literary scene in a long time. He writes with that air of cool judicious detachment that is now universally recognized as one of the signatures of serious fiction in this period, but after reading a few pages of *Parktilden Village*, you become pleasantly aware of the absence of portentous solemnity in the tone, and you begin to see that for once the cool judiciousness is doing something more than calling your attention to the author's subtlety and good taste: it is working to define a critical attitude toward the main character. This bland and pleasant young sociologist is ultimately to be shown as capable of the most vicious irresponsibility and the most heedless cruelty. But we soon understand that Elliott's intention is not to indict the individual Hazen; he is attacking the whole culture personified by Hazen for breeding emotional sterility and moral emptiness—in short, for having no values. For the purposes of a polemic against the "scientific" or "positivistic" view of life, Hazen is well conceived. He is tall, handsome, and affable in manner, a kind of human counterpart to the shiny, comfortable, and efficient uniformity of the apartments in the California housing development where he lives; except for those habits in himself which are susceptible of being affected by an act of conscious determination (he is a great maker of resolutions), he dismisses all self-confrontation as wasteful and meaningless; and he refers everything in his experience to neat categories, refusing to be bothered with nice discriminations. For all this, however, Hazen is blood brother to some of the less amiable elements in American life, his

2. Beacon. $3.50.

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sociological research projects being mainly a pretext for reading comic strips (and then creating a successful one himself) and hot-rodding with the leather-jacketed gang on the drag-strip. Here, I think, the novel is at its best: Hazen comes through vividly as not very different in spirit from the wild kids he is "studying," and Elliott's point—that the rise of positivism and the malignant spread of adolescent recklessness are both expressions of the same spiritual vacuum in our society, a vacuum which is itself most clearly exemplified by mass culture—gets established without too much prompting from the wings.

Judging from a coy hint at the end, Elliott's answer is God. But the hint is so coy and so timidly brought forward that we are left with some doubt as to whether and to what degree he really means it. Under the assumption that he does, and assuming further that Elliott can be taken as a representative spokesman, *Parktilden Village* becomes an extremely revealing document of the current feelings in the "Church party" about the loss of values. Except for the last section of the book, where there is a sudden and unexpected shift in attitude toward Hazen, Elliott's tone throughout is critical but hardly heated. He pokes fun at Hazen and he attributes most of our troubles to the usual trio of science, industrialism, and the liberal ethic, but despite this, you get no sense of a refusal to accept the reality of Hazen. Elliott is neither horrified nor repelled: when he describes Hazen's simultaneous involvement in affairs with the middle-aged wife of one of his former teachers and her teen-age daughter, he writes of the incident not (as Graham Greene, say, might) as a sinister matter with diabolic overtones, but as the kind of occurrence that no longer seems so outrageous. It is only when he comes to the end and spells out the pain Hazen's behavior has caused others that he feels impelled to express shock and to bring in an allusion to the need for prayer and faith in God. Even here, however, there is ambivalence, for the character who is the vehicle of this message is too silly and superficial a person to take seriously herself. In other words, *Parktilden Village* would appear to indicate that sheer habituation to the nihilism of American life—for a nihilist, a believer in nothing, is precisely what Hazen is—has infected even the proponents of a religious solution, who now find it hard to assert anything more powerful against it than a mild irony, a fairly stale argument, and a willed outrage.

Nihilism is given its full head in what from my point of view is the best of the three novels in this group, J. P. Donleavy's *The Ginger Man*.[3] The book is undramatic, badly paced, and very uneven indeed,

3. McDowell, Obolensky. $3.95.

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with more weak passages than it can comfortably assimilate, but it is also an extremely funny novel, and its vitality is more than merely rhetorical. In a furiously exuberant prose style that suggests wild horses let loose, Donleavy lashes about with abandon at everything in sight, only to find that he has been flailing the empty air, so utterly has the once solid structure of middle-class respectability disintegrated from lack of any conviction to prop it up. His hero, Sebastian Dangerfield, is a young expatriate American studying in Dublin on the G.I. Bill, where he has forced his English wife and their baby to live in squalor and poverty. The studying is a farce; he has no intention of becoming a lawyer or anything else. All he is doing is marking time until his prosperous father dies, and he intends to go on marking time for the rest of his days when he comes into his inheritance. He is a drunkard, a philanderer, a cheat, a liar, and even a petty thief. At first, we respond to him as we do to any character in fiction who allows us to participate in the fantasy of complete release, especially when the release largely takes the form of constant drinking and jumping from bed to bed. And so it comes as a momentous shock when we begin to realize that Dangerfield is not an endearing "Rabelaisian" rascal. Not only does he treat his wife with appalling cruelty, but we learn that because he has been stealing their baby's milk money, the infant has developed a case of rickets. This is no joke, and it jolts us right out of the realm of pleasant fantasy into the most sordid of realities—which, of course, is exactly what Donleavy wants it to do. Why, then, do we continue to feel the attraction of Dangerfield? What claim does he exert on our sympathies? The decisive factor, I think, is his honesty. Unlike almost everyone else in the book (and incidentally unlike Kerouac's heroes, with whom he has been foolishly compared), he never simulates feelings that he does not in fact feel, he refuses to make excuses, and he will not hide behind empty pieties. He is not a bum and a scoundrel out of ill will or malice or insensitivity. On the contrary, he strikes us as a man who has looked into himself and found nothing, and then looked about the world and found no set of values (neither "traditional" nor "liberal") in sufficiently robust condition to exert any pull over his soul. Dangerfield, in short, is not enacting a fantasy of release, he is living by the truth of his times. Nor is he a rebel, for there is nothing to rebel against, everything gives way before him. He is—to use the terminology adopted by Alfred Kazin in a brilliant article in the current issue of *Psychoanalysis and the Psychoanalytic Review*—an example of the "stranger" as hero, an example of what becomes of the impulse toward rebellion at a moment in history when the only conventions in existence are anachronistic

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survivals of a moribund ethos, shadows without substance. Donleavy takes no joy in this situation—his joy is in the honest exposure of it. Nor is he able to offer any answers. The only positives in the novel—an earthgoddess type of girl who falls in love with Dangerfield, and the warm friendship that exists between the few people who, like Dangerfield, are in on the ghastly secret of our times and act upon it—are literary clichés derived from Joyce and Hemingway. *The Ginger Man* is fundamentally a book without hope (Dangerfield is even cut out of his father's will at the end) and it reflects, more directly than Elliott or Buechner, I think, the true spiritual contours of this period. It is a response not to the death of traditional values, not to the dislocations caused by industrialism and technology—there are no memories of an older, more settled way of life here—but precisely to the final collapse of the bourgeois era, a book that comes out of a moment in history when the old world has died and the new one about to be born may never struggle its way out of the womb.

It was, of course, Camus who first spotted the significance of this new style of nihilism and identified it, in *The Stranger,* with the pathological apathy of the narrator Meursault—the French were far in advance of the Americans in seeing that the "rebel" was giving way in our day to the "stranger." In his latest book, a collection of stories called *Exile and the Kingdom,*[4] Camus continues to deal with the predicament of men and women moving dully through an indifferent universe (he is very much a man in quest of solutions, and not at all content with mere diagnosis), but my impression is that he has lost the firm grasp he had on the problem in his earlier work. The decline set in with his last novel, *The Fall,* a book that seems to me only a mechanical repetition of what he had already accomplished before, and even at their best these new stories have nothing of the clear brilliance and beauty of *The Stranger* or the thickness of texture that distinguished *The Plague.* Nevertheless, Camus is in a different class from the three American writers I have just been discussing, not only because he brings a much wider historical and philosophical perspective to bear on the common theme, but because for him the Meursaults exist as a sinister possibility, they are a projection of what he himself might so easily become, rather than an image of what he already is. The source of his power is not in my opinion his superior artistry (indeed, as a craftsman of the novel he is rather poorly endowed by comparison with a dozen lesser writers), but in the very delicate balance he manages to strike between identification with the nihilists he writes about and detach-

4. Knopf. $3.50.

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ment from them. Reading Camus is like watching a man plunge over a precipice and then grab the edge of the cliff with his nails and hold on by God knows what miraculous instinct to survive. It hardly matters that this instinct is inarticulate, that Camus's solutions (submitting to the knowledge of the predicament, sharing the burdens of the oppressed) are no solutions—or at least nothing more than individual solutions. What matters is that he has looked upon the face of death and lived, that he has visited chaos and returned with the message that all we can do is try to *think* our way back into a world of meaning, to create a new world of meaning that makes no concession to the bankrupt philosophies of church or state.

What Sartre calls the "anti-novels" of Nathalie Sarraute seem, so far as I can make out from the only one as yet published in this country, *Portrait of a Man Unknown,*[5] to represent a total submission to the meaningless of existence. Mme. Sarraute has plunged over the cliff, landed on her feet, and then begun to stroll calmly through the void as we watch dimly and incredulously from above. There is something rather horrible in this coolly presented picture of nothingness, this absolute taking for granted that life is a Chinese box and that as you painfully pry open each successive lid you are rewarded with yet another vacuum. What appears at first to be the insanity of the narrator, who speaks paranoically of "They" and who for no reason whatever becomes obsessed with a shadowy couple, an elderly man and his spinster daughter living together in hatred and mutual contempt, turns out to be intended as a picture of the actual state of affairs in our world. There are no characters in the book, for individuality is an illusion that can no longer be maintained; no communication between persons, for there is nothing left to communicate except, as Sartre points out in his introduction, the most generalized of commonplaces. No other writer, not even Beckett or Ionesco, has gone quite as far as Mme. Sarraute, and further than this it would be impossible to go, since her extraordinary novel is written at the point where literally everything, including the six senses themselves, are just about to dissolve into thin air.

Thomas Hinde's interesting novel, *Happy as Larry,*[6] provides a good illustration of how the new nihilism is being treated in England. Here again we have a hero who is shiftless, irresponsible, and unable—with justification, given what we see of the possibilities for engagement in the novel itself—to get interested in anything. Larry Vincent is also capable of horrendous behavior: he runs off pretending not to have

5. Braziller. $3.50.
6. Criterion. $3.95.

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noticed when he sees his wife (whom he loves) hit by a car, and he spends the rest of the novel trying to do penance by tracking down a compromising photograph which can damage the career of a close friend—an act that he has decided will help him get a fresh start in life. The book is imbued with the same sense of the purposelessness of the common routines that you come upon in John Wain's *Hurry on Down,* and a strong feeling that everyone in the modern world, ordinary people no less than self-conscious questioners, is at heart a nihilist:

Suffering was hidden away—in hospitals and asylums. As a result they had no attitude to it—except resentment that it should be brought to their notice. The suffering they didn't know about, which wasn't illness or hunger, but just empty unhappiness—that was hidden too, behind their prosperous faces, behind the hire-purchased walnut suite, the four-seater saloon with mother in the back. . . .

As for the hero himself, his terrible confusions are seen as a product of the absence of any values in the society he inhabits which he can accept happily or rebel against (either course would give his life meaning):

"Can you imagine not knowing the difference between right and wrong?" [he asks a girl.]

"No."

"I can. One person says do this, another do that. I like them both. I understand exactly why they say what they say and think the other absurd. I can think the way either of them think. What should I do?"

"You must feel."

"I sometimes genuinely don't—or rather I feel both. Then what am I to do? Start arguing? I haven't the intelligence. Anyway it's a life work."

The only exceptions to this rule are a few Bohemians whose protest against the emptiness of modern life is to "refuse to do what doesn't interest them."

The oppressive gloom of *Happy as Larry* stands in the sharpest possible contrast to the destructive exhilaration of *The Ginger Man*: Hinde can hardly bear the pain of looking at what his own book reveals. Yet beneath this gloom, one senses the presence of a notion that the problem is fundamentally social, and therefore soluble by political action. Unlike his American literary contemporaries, Hinde, I would guess, believes that the process of disintegration he finds in the world around him is reversible—an understandable sentiment in a country where technology and mass culture are so much less taken for granted than here (what American writer would use the fact that people com-

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municate by telephone as an occasion for reflecting that machines were robbing us of the "common feeling . . . before nature, to God"?) and where the inevitable social changes that have been gathering steam in the last few years can so easily seem, to those suffering from the attendant dislocations, a matter of free choice, like voting for or against commercial television. (C. P. Snow has said that most English literary people still haven't come to terms with the industrial revolution.)

Hinde is usually associated with the rather heterogeneous group of writers now irrevocably known as the Angry Young Men. These writers are often described as lower-class rebels against the Establishment who are bitter about the decline of British prestige in the world and/or—so the usual cliché goes—the drabness of life in the Welfare State. There is a slight touch of truth in this description, but apart from the fact that it oversimplifies and ignores the element of genuine rejoicing on the English Left (where all but one or two of the AYM can be found) at Britain's retirement from the colonial scene and her increasing egalitarianism, its main weakness is that it misses the jauntiness and the underlying *optimism* of Amis, Wain, and even Osborne—an optimism that derives from their excitement at the prospect of a new society coming into being which has the opportunity to create a healthy "organic" culture for the first time since the industrial revolution. To my ears, it is a jauntiness remarkably reminiscent of the tone of much American writing of the 1930's (writing, by the way, which is greatly admired in England today—the early plays of Lillian Hellman and Clifford Odets have been recommended by the influential young drama critic Kenneth Tynan as a model for the British theater to follow). But many other things besides tone in the British cultural atmosphere today also recall the spirit of the American 1930's. To take a vivid, though possibly trivial example: during the few days when DeGaulle's access to power was still in doubt, a number of English writers hired a hall in London to protest against the impending murder of freedom in France and formed a Committee to Save the Fourth Republic. (It was later reported that the Committee's message of solidarity to certain French anti-Gaullistes caused bewilderment even in Paris, where this fervent gesture seemed, as the English themselves would put it, "a bit thick," given the temper of the times.) If I remember rightly, the protest meeting was organized by the *Universities and Left Review,* a new socialist magazine which has a fresh, naive bounciness that stands out in bold relief against the tired, almost worldly sophistication of its American counterpart *Dissent* (for once, the tables of European "maturity" and American "innocence" have been turned), and a hopeful belief in the

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possibility of social solutions to problems of culture that reminds one of *Partisan Review* in its youthful phase. The H-bomb, one might say, is to the English left today what the depression was to the American Left of the 1930's—a disaster that stimulates enthusiastic intellectual activity.

The conclusion to be drawn from this admittedly sketchy analysis is that England, as usual, represents a special case. English writers—at least on the Left—are as deeply preoccupied with the new nihilism as the Americans or the French, but they tend to identify it with the specific domestic conditions of their own country, and in particular with the refusal of moribund Establishment values to lie down and die. (John Osborne, who is the most extreme exponent of this point of view, has declared that the British masses are "not conditioned to seriousness but to totem worship" by the monarchy, by the church, by "people sodden in the culture-mores of Oxford and Cambridge," and by "implicit ruling-class ideals like 'restraint,' 'good taste,' 'healthy caution,' and so on," and he voices the hope that "there will be singing one day" . . . under socialism.)

But confidence in the possibility of a social answer to the new nihilism seems confined to England. Silone's latest novel, *The Secret of Luca*,[7] projects as an ideal the heroic individual who triumphs by following his own deepest convictions against the demands of society. Since these convictions include a belief that the law has no business prying into his private affairs, Luca refuses to defend himself against a false murder charge, and he spends forty years in prison until he is exonerated by the actual criminal's deathbed confession. If this were all, we could accept Silone's contention (in a recent interview) that his book is a defense of the right of privacy, though the weaknesses in his argument would still be very damaging. What sense does it make for a man to claim the right of privacy when he has been accused of a crime? Is any sane principle being served when such a man goes to jail rather than reveal his whereabouts on the night of the crime? On the evidence of the novel itself, however, it is not Luca's defense of a principle more sacred than the law that draws Silone's admiration. It is, quite simply, his astonishing ability to hold out against all pressure for what he believes is right. But we cannot be moved by Luca's heroism without respecting the conventions of chivalry and honor to which he has sacrificed himself, and they are of a kind that can only seem silly today (to have accounted for his movements when the murder was committed would, in

7. Harper. $3.95.

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his eyes, have besmirched the reputation of a married woman with whom he was in love, despite the fact that nothing had ever happened between them). Even a very great novelist would have been hard put to give meaning and dignity to this heroism. All Silone—a very good and very intelligent writer—can do is impress us with the pathos of Luca, and it is a tribute to his humane artistry that only once, when Luca weeps with unabated passion while reading the diary of the lady he had loved at a distance for forty years, do we feel unequivocally that this man is too ridiculous to bother with. It turns out, then, that even Silone, who is second only to Malraux as a distinguished writer with an honorable career of *engagement,* is now having difficulty in proclaiming the possibility of absolute dedication to a moral code. Surely it is significant that in order to assert the supreme value of passionate inner conviction he should have had to wander off into a wholly foreign area of feeling and assumptions, and that he should precisely have hit upon a code that can no longer command any respect—quite as though he were inadvertently confessing that the "secret" of Luca is of precious little relevance today.

Only, I think, against some such background as the one I have been trying to sketch can the wonder that has greeted Bernard Malamud's last two books, his novel *The Assistant* and his collection of stories *The Magic Barrel,*[8] be fully understood. Many reviewers have made a stab at describing the unique flavor of his work, but what they have said in specific matters less than their agreement that a highly special—and highly elusive—quality exists that very nearly beggars definition. Since he writes so well about Jews, and poor ones at that, and since he has succeeded in catching the very life of Yiddish speech better than any of the countless American writers who have tried before him, the natural thing to do has been to look for a handle in "Jewishness" or Sholem Aleichem or even the Bible. None of this seems to me of much help; in fact, I would argue that Malamud's conception of Jewishness and his idea of what Jews are really like come out of his own head and cannot be supported, except in a vague general way, by precedent in Yiddish or Hebrew literature. To Malamud, the Jew is humanity seen under the twin aspects of suffering and moral aspiration. Therefore any man who suffers greatly and who also longs to be better than he is can be called a Jew. (Frankie Alpine's formal conversion to Judaism at the end of *The Assistant* is almost gratuitous, since he became a Jew, in the only sense that Malamud understands the word,

8. Farrar, Straus and Cudahy. $3.75.

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many chapters before.) It is not so much that this idea is wrong—whatever that would mean—as that Malamud holds to it with an unqualified intensity and directness that actual observation of the East European immigrant Jews he is portraying would not appear to warrant. And here lies the source of that strangeness we are puzzled to account for in his Jewish characters—they are so beautifully drawn in their physical beings (their speech, their gestures, their ordinary social attitudes, their milieux) that we never think to question their authenticity as East European immigrant Jews, when all the while their spiritual lineaments have been quietly copied not from any models on earth but from an idea in the mind of Bernard Malamud.

The point is that Malamud's unique and marvellous ability to write without embarrassment or falsity of the simplest and most basic emotions, his power to say "And there were days when he was sick to death of everything," or "They pressed mouths together and parted forever" (the last line of "The Loan," one of the three stories in this collection that deserve to live forever, the other two being "The Bill" and, of course, "The Magic Barrel") depends on a certain blindness to the full realities of the world around him. The trick he has turned is not unlike what Yeats did with magic: in the absence of a culture that could supply him with a secure basis for the things he needs to believe, he has created a folk, partly out of what actually exists and partly out of what his spirit demands. You would not go to Bernard Malamud for a balanced and reliable picture of the East European immigrant Jew, but you would go to him for profounder truths about human beings than mere observation can yield.

Malamud has elicited wonder and astonishment from the most heterogeneous body of readers because he has managed to escape both the corrosions of modern life and the deepenings of insight that have accompanied these corrosions. He is a genuine "sport" who has travelled his own idiosyncratic road, almost as untouched by literary influences as by the historical currents in which the rest of us are being swept away. And his work, when it is good—which sufficiently often it is—seems a kind of miracle, an act of spiritual autonomy perfect enough to persuade us that the possibility of freedom from the determinings of history and sociology still exists. That wacky, wonderful voice we hear in a Malamud story is one of the few sounds remaining in our world that cannot be accounted for in terms of anything but itself. For it is a voice that speaks of people who belong to no period in particular, and in a language that belongs not to history but to nature.

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Steven Marcus

THREE OBSESSED CRITICS

Some years ago, in an essay which soon became famous, Randall Jarrell argued that our age is an age of criticism. Subsequent events have tended to verify Mr. Jarrell's notion, and epithets like "critical industry" and "critical racket" have become commonplaces in literary and academic conversation. In England, the phrase "American criticism" regularly evokes a response once reserved for the lower middle class; there is something depressingly brash, energetic, ambitious, professional, engineered, about this large-scale undertaking; its intense gravity and self-consciousness seem especially suspect and are very likely bad form, slightly vulgar. But then the English have seldom taken kindly to formal discourse of any sort, and their judgments of our cardinal literary discipline must be discounted as largely defensive and self-justifying. The three volumes* under discussion do much toward explaining the English discomfort. These books simply outface anything our transatlantic cousins are able to do. Coming from diverse points of the intellectual compass and having in common little besides the common pursuit of true judgment, they may be fairly taken to represent the solemn dedication, the devoted single-mindedness, and the proud service of the absolute which are characteristic of the American critical enterprise.

Hugh Kenner is one of the most remarkable critics writing today. Mr. Kenner has a subtle, supple intelligence and a genuine gift for developing and enlarging other people's ideas. One of his sentences has long seemed to me a touchstone of this talent. In his book on Wyndham Lewis he writes, "It hasn't been safe for men of letters to think since the seventeenth century, when ideas were substituted for things as the accredited materials of thought." One can trace the progress of this notion from the dogmatic coarseness and crudity of T. S. Eliot's "dis-

* Hugh Kenner, *Gnomon: Essays on Contemporary Literature,* McDowell, Obolensky, $4.50; Maxwell Geismar, *American Moderns: From Rebellion to Conformity,* Hill and Wang, $3.95; Harry Levin, *The Power of Blackness,* Knopf, $4.00.

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sociation of sensibility" and certain vaguely metaphorical statements by William Carlos Williams to the complex, definitive clarity of Mr. Kenner's formulation. What a vista of history this sentence opens up for us: happy John Donne with his brain full of real compasses safely wrapped in real hair; poor, empty-headed William Blake who could only have perilous ideas about London or Newton's atoms. Mr. Kenner handles most ideas in this instructive fashion.

Mr. Kenner is also an editor of considerable skill, though in his modest way he doesn't advertise it; and he is not afraid of rejecting lines or statements which do not seem authentic to him or to his clear sense of the writer's purpose. The opening essay in *Gnomon* is about Yeats, and Mr. Kenner unveils Yeats's secret, hieratic intention, which was not to write poems but to prepare a "deliberated artistic Testament," in which all things were to make sense only in relation to other things within the volume.

The book, then, is (by a Yeatsian irony) self-contained, like the Great Smaragdine Tablet that said, "Things below are copies," and was itself one of the things below; a sacred book like the Apocalypse of St. John, not like most poetry a marginal commentary on the world to be read with one eye on the pragmatical pig of a text.

One of the poems that Mr. Kenner uses to demonstrate this assertion is "Ego Dominus Tuus," in which the following appears in my edition: "I seek an image not a book." Mr. Kenner neither reproduces nor refers to that statement, and I conclude that he has discovered that Yeats never wrote it: like most sacred books or apocalyptic visions it has probably passed through porcine, pragmatic and irreligious hands, and Mr. Kenner has done us all a service by his excision.

Mr. Kenner's ideas about literary and social history are no less curious and exciting than his editorial manipulations. For him, "Chaucer is the last thoroughly civilized English writer." (This is, isn't it, infinitely more accurate and useful than saying that Chaucer was the first thoroughly civilized English writer?) Under the impact of this remark I returned to Layamon and Minot, reread "The Battle of Brunaburh" and peeked into *The Pearl*. Of course Mr. Kenner is right; compared to these, *Measure for Measure* or *King Lear*, say, are indeed the products of a barbarous and dehumanized sensibility. But, gentle reader, let us not despair over the ravages of history—for Fenellosa has saved the day! "What Fenellosa does is install us once again in a universe where intelligibility does not need to be imposed by the mind. . . ." The grasp of philosophy and of the history of ideas that this statement indicates is staggering, but no more so than Mr. Kenner's remarks about Whit-

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man, "the democracy snob." Whitman, "a corrupted prophet" who had "an intermittent Blakean talent for naive perception," is the chief instrument in a conspiracy organized against the real America and its true history, "The conspiracy to suppose that American political history begins, effectively, with Lincoln. . . ." This baleful plot has as its object the suppression of "the whole novel tradition of an aristocratic government deriving authority from a popular franchise," the central, vital tradition of American politics. It is directed by men who believe, perniciously, that it is "for some reason important to present an America dominated by an image of itself as egalitarian paradise"; these are, *mirabile dictu,* the same bigots who rigged up the new interest in Henry James, for "one notes as an overlooked feature of the James revival that it is only to a neurotic James that it has been thought safe to entrust the aristocratic tradition"—which is just about the most persuasive argument for the soundness of Ezra Pound's mind I have yet to read. Furthermore, the worst result of these subversive machinations against America is the "notion of an American consciousness diffused across the sidewalks of Manhattan." We must, I think, pause here to sympathize with this *cri de coeur*: the nights out in Santa Barbara must get awfully lonely.

The sidewalks of New York lead us to Mr. Kenner's essay on Freud, that "Sinaitic will-specialist." This essay, a review of the first volume of Ernest Jones's biography, is a little classic of ignorant and conceited certitude, and I cannot hope to do it justice here. To Mr. Kenner, Freud "is already as dated as William Archer or *Trilby*," and was "continually the victim of bright ideas." Mr. Kenner strikes through the mask and finds that in Freud's work "the illusion of being conscious, and of intending and willing, is represented as no more than an indispensable self-deceit," revealing here not merely his encyclopedic understanding of that work but his mastery of tautology as well. The world Freud created, moreover, is one "in which, ultimately, nothing possesses any interest at all, except for the sort of tumid interest people can always derive from themselves"—which is, I suppose, not only a direct hit at Freud, but a shot that ricochets down the corridors of history, felling, among others, Jesus, St. Paul and St. Augustine, all of whom, one suspects, Mr. Kenner must by implication be concerned to deny.

What is all this? Is it, as crusty Christopher once said, "a narcotic dose administered by a crazy charlatan"? It's hardly that simple. Praising Lessing as a critic, Kierkegaard remarked that he possessed "an exceedingly uncommon gift of explaining what he himself had under-

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stood. There he stopped. In our age people go further and explain more than they have understood." Mr. Kenner's special genius lies in explaining more than he has understood in ways that few others will ever care to understand. He is more like an alchemist or a mathematician than he is like a critic; in his most typical essays he does nothing less than conjure up an autonomous, self-referring universe, whose terms have virtually nothing to do with experience, and which functions according to some arcane concoction of rules whose unintelligibility is the safeguard of their inconsequence. Mr. Kenner's writing about Wyndham Lewis thoroughly exemplifies this practice. Once that machine of mystification is set going, once one assumes that a work of literature is a self-enclosed system, then all questions of judgment or justification are impertinent (how else, after all, *could* one write about Lewis?) and Mr. Kenner can come up with things like this: "Perfection, it seems, implies an exclusivity of function which leaves no room for the self-knowledge which in Lewisian terms is the ground of intelligence, and so intelligence is as rare among angels as among men." Mr. Kenner's new essay on Lewis in *Gnomon* is, in fact, an achievement in itself—it manages to have about as much relation to literature, to experience or to Lewis as the binomial theorem. He is similarly successful in his discussion of Pound's *Rock-drill* cantos, from which I have extracted this representative passage of Mr. Kenner's prose:

> the interaction between heaven, prince, and people paralleled by that between the descent of light, the refractive processes of dented water, and the substantiality of the water-bug, which results in a radiant unforeseeable entity, the spectral flower on the stone. This metaphysical image effects a blending of the moral ambience of the *tê* ideogram with the motifs of the Paradiso proper in the latter half of the book.

Pity the poor English! How can we expect those sad and exhausted empirical souls to continue to withstand this engine of organized inanity? They have not, they have given in, surrendered unconditionally: in 1956 Mr. Kenner was invited to address the Royal Society of Literature. *Eheu fugaces*!

Meanwhile, from the antipodes speaks Maxwell Geismar, although it does not seem quite credible to imply that he and Mr. Kenner inhabit the same universe. His new book, *American Moderns,* is subtitled "From Rebellion to Conformity" and is largely made up of reviews reprinted from *The Nation, The Saturday Review* and *The New York Times.* Mr. Geismar stands for the tradition of "social protest," or, as he felicitously puts it elsewhere, "the social realism school." We are,

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he tells us, in desperate shape, for most of our writers have "repudiated their heritage and their link with a central literary tradition of the past," have lost contact with "the 'atheists,' the radicals, the immigrant dreamers of social justice in the late nineteenth century, who mainly inherited and preserved our true cultural heritage." With Mr. Kenner, Mr. Geismar believes that a damnable plot is afoot to betray the true America and its history, traditions and literature; and they both agree that the same powers are masterminding the operation. Those who, in Mr. Kenner's eyes, have subverted the tradition of an aristocratic government and who are not disciples of Pound or Lewis, are, strangely enough, the same recreants who according to Mr. Geismar have intrigued seditiously against the "central tradition of American conscience" and have "almost blacked [it] out of the national consciousness today." The measure of their perversity can be gauged by their deplorable refusal to worship in Mr. Geismar's Pantheon, where the works of "Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Jack London, Ellen Glasgow, and Theodore Dreiser," the great writers of our century, and our true cultural heritage, lie enshrined.

As befits his conception of himself as critic, Mr. Geismar is explicitly prescriptive: he *knows* what novelists need and want and is generous with his advice. Thus, what is essentially missing in Hemingway is "a sense of that 'ordinary' life, in all its variety and mystery, that had always been the core of the great novels, at least." He locates the center of Sinclair Lewis's failure by perceiving that nowhere did he "attempt to project a single working-class figure of any dimension" or "an effective or even attractive social rebel." He reproves Norman Mailer for similar lapses: "Mr. Mailer leans rather heavily on the sexual experiences of his lower-class figures, too. These may be a solace for the common man, and even a source of strength, but they don't constitute his only achievement." These two sentences are, I think, a miracle of the picturesque—they summon up an image of the Worker, striding from the whore house to the factory, while his sense of achievement swells to a crescendo of moral triumph, like Tamburlaine in Persepolis.

And what ought novelists to write about? Like a Philadelphia lawyer, Mr. Geismar comes well-prepared:

> one would welcome a new generation of novelists who would look into such things as McCarthyism, or the white-collar equivalent of Nixonism, or the loyalty oaths and security dismissals, or the large-size looting of our natural resources, or the marriages of the corporations, and the rise of the stock market while small business and farming declines [sic]; or the hostility of Asia and the alienation of Europe while our public mind is both intimidated and dazzled by a series of shifting advertising slogans.

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Mr. Geismar's tastes and interests are truly catholic, and his voice is as mild as the sucking dove's. It is always rewarding to read so genial a critic—it justifies one's confidence in the pleasure principle and in the richness and possibilities of experience. Moreover, I wish that Norman Mailer would take some of this advice, and instead of leaning on the sex life of lower-class figures would describe just how Anaconda coils herself around National Gypsum when they get into bed together.

Yet Mr. Geismar knows that novelists are not presently interested in the things that interest him, that they are not dedicated to finding "self-expression . . . in the movements of social reform or social revolution" as they once were and ought still to be. And he knows why they aren't, too; they are being misled, they are the dupes, the front-men in that old conspiracy against Geismar, home and beauty. In an epiphany called "Higher and Higher Criticism," Mr. Geismar identifies the brutes, these literary counterparts of McCarthy and Nixon. They have established the "New Criticism," which is

> surprisingly well organized, with its chains of communications running from the colleges to the dominant literary magazines (*Kenyon, Hudson, Partisan* reviews, etc.), to the foundations and fellowships. It could be called a literary monopoly . . . it has been developed in this country [like fascism, it is international] mainly by romantic Southern conservatives. . . . Another branch of what is almost an interlocking directorate includes the literary ex-Communists seeking refuge in pure criticsim; and such hesitant humanists as Lionel Trilling, who now represent the "Liberal Mind."

Still another subsidiary wing of the cartel is run by "bitter ex-radicals like Sidney Hook." Having clarified things so thoroughly, Mr. Geismar goes on to speculate about "the amount of fascism in this general movement and the poetry it advocates," since what binds all these power-mongers together is at once "a bland authoritarianism" about literature and a lost ability "to keep their human values intact"—that is, if they ever had human values, for the only people whom Mr. Geismar seems to allow as having them are those who were once radicals (Mr. Geismar's favorite euphemism) and who have not repudiated their heritage and commitment. That we are in imminent peril from this movement is Mr. Geismar's constant message: "Isn't it odd that our English departments, which yielded themselves to the racist concept of the Anglo-Saxon 'gentleman' at the turn of the century, now flaunt the defiant banner of the Old South?" It would take, I believe, a bitter ex-radical like Sidney Hook to analyze properly the relations between the two parts of this proposition: I would merely like to point out the ex-

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quisitely modulated resonance, the delicate suggestiveness, in the word "odd" (herewith qualifying as a New Critic and bland authoritarian) and call to the reader's fancy a vision of John Crowe Ransom wrapped in a Confederate flag at the bloody angle called Ambiguity, while Cleanth Brooks, mounted on his dappled charger, Paradox, leads his irregulars around to the rear to cut off Mr. Geismar and his embattled, decimated, yet loyal, crew. At the same time, up north, Phillips and Rahv are at work in the munitions factories, sabotaging the big dialectical guns, Trilling is making hesitant speeches about conciliation on the corner of 116th Street, and Hook is instigating draft riots in Washington Square.

In the latest issue of *December,* a little magazine published in Iowa City, Mr. Geismar reviews his own book. He gives himself a very good notice, but is slightly troubled that he should do so, even in "this obscure little western publication which I hope and pray will never reach our eastern shores." Well, Mr. Geismar ought to have known better; he ought to have known that in this age of witch hunts and mass persecutions no liberal or progressive is safe, that the literary FBI has a full dossier on him—our agents in the midwest notified central headquarters long before *December* ever hit the newsstands. I would like, however, to linger over one statement in that review: Mr. Geismar declares that he "writes, on the whole, as if reading books was a pleasure." I have compiled a modest thesaurus of Mr. Geismar's edifying remarks about writers, and would in this connection like to set down a few extracts from it here. To Mr. Geismar, Hemingway "has always refused to understand the nature of his own private orbit of anguish"; Fitzgerald, Hemingway, T. S. Eliot, and the other writers of the twenties "were masters, not of life, but of a kind of romantic enchantment; wizards of illusion," who were "as ignorant of their real heritage as they were indifferent to their future"; John Dos Passos lacks "an interest in people as such, a knowledge of possible experience, a curiosity about life simply as life"; Faulkner "doesn't seem to understand the South," and is "completely bound in by the class and caste concepts of his ancestry and origins"; James Gould Cozzens is deficient in "primary feeling; he is a cold writer who has needed a recharge, say, of human sympathy"; Steinbeck's work contains "a certain malice and hostility toward human life itself"; *The Deer Park* has "no human center"; its social values "are based on a biological void"; Saul Bellow is struck off as "the Herman Wouk of the academic quarterlies"; J. D. Salinger's later stories prove that he fails "to understand his own, true, life experience and to fulfill himself"; in James Jones's novels, people are "so

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odious and sterile, so lacking in affection or sympathy" that Mr. Geismar doubts whether Jones is "capable of describing ordinary human relationships at all." These are representative specimens of Mr. Geismar's critical vocabulary, of his tact and tone; and it is clear that the pleasure that he gets from reading seems to be exceeded only by his sense of the intelligence, honesty and seriousness of the subjects of his reviews. And if one feels that the coo of the sucking dove is occasionally drowned out by the whine of the bottom-dog, one should recall that many of these reviews were published in *The Nation*, because, as Mr. Geismar says, "*The Nation* was the only magazine that would publish them."

Finally there is Mr. Geismar's prose, which is as distinctive in its way as Mr. Kenner's. It is lively and precise, and scouts all stale or fuzzy metaphors—thus, "Our writers do indeed lack a spiritual purpose, which in former generations was accompanied by a broad social base. . . ." Mr. Geismar must here be referring to the pedestal on which Ozymandias's feet remained. And there is this:

The theme of sibling rivalry is recurrent and dominant in the Old Testament itself. It is subject to many levels of interpretation, from the moral, ethical, or social import, to the deepest levels of psychology, where both Mann and Freud found it so fascinating.

I find something wondrous in the picture of Mann and Freud skin-diving together in the unconscious, searching for "imports," Mr. Geismar's metaphor for spanish gold. Or there is this, my personal favorite:

As in almost all of Dos Passos' fiction, the human core of his philosophical concepts is absent. Perhaps the central deficiency in his political thought rests after all, upon a psychobiological failure.

Only an impenitent radical would have the courage publicly to rebel against the reactionary dictates of style—no one but a deeply committed progressive could deal so progressively with sense and metaphor, would refuse this loyally to conform to the repressive class and caste concepts of the English language.

If Mr. Kenner speaks from the right and Mr. Geismar from the left, then Harry Levin is at the center, the dead center. Mr. Levin, however, is really beyond party strife, and the political metaphor is not very pertinent. Mr. Levin lives out in the great world. He is a kind of literary Christian Dior, dealing almost exclusively in current, high-priced fashionable ideas; and his literary creations are like Dior's models, objects, devices, for putting on and taking off these attitudes as if

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they were no more than garments. *The Power of Blackness* traces the images of blackness—and of whiteness, shade, shadow, dusk and night—as they appear in Hawthorne, Poe and Melville. The origin of this pervasive image lies in Calvinism and the involvement of the American imagination with its notion of original sin. To this extent, Mr. Levin's book is substantially like Richard Chase's remarkable *The American Novel and its Tradition,* which V. S. Pritchett recently called, without exaggeration I think, "decisive." But Mr. Levin has a fatal attraction for pretentiously going the best one better and for resonant and classy new terms: he wants to write a "literary iconology"; his icons become "archetypes," "elemental shape[s] assumed by the collective imagination," and are expressed through "fabulation," which is a process no less singular than "man's habit of telling stories as a means of summarizing his activities and crystallizing his attitudes." Mr. Levin also likes to speak about Hawthorne's "general vision of evil," a phrase one might hesitate to use even about a theologian, much less a novelist, but which in its vague inflation is pretty clearly current and *chic.*

Mr. Levin has never shaved with Occam's razor, and he is hirsute with self-proliferating entities. Of Hawthorne, again, he writes, "he balanced the rival claims of Eros and Thanatos, love and death in their universal phase." If we take Eros and Thanatos in their modern acceptation and with all their modern associations, which, one assumes, Mr. Levin has in mind, they scarcely seem "love and death in their universal phase" but something a shade more complex and precise, and which, when draped upon Hawthorne in this context, simply produce, like the chemise, an attractive blur. Or, Mr. Levin has this to say about Thoreau's idea of the fable: "Since it could pass from one environment to another without essentially changing, in a process which folklorists would call diffusion, it could become a constant factor, an irreducible unit of what Jung would call the collective unconscious"—which is the intellectual equivalent of travelling from the Bronx to Brooklyn via Chicago. The allusions take us on a long and dull and gratuitous—though not really unpleasant—trip, and having arrived at the end of the line we find that after accumulating all this mileage we haven't gotten anywhere.

But Mr. Levin is not merely a high-flyer in the empyrean of vagrant generalities. With heroic assiduity he has read through an entire literature, and ferreted out, noted and counted every reference to blackness that occurs in it:

Statistical investigation has shown what the common reader might expect: that blackness predominates, equaled—and slightly eclipsed—by

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whiteness, when the latter is taken together with grayness. Actual colors are not much in evidence, except for lurid yellow and various shades or red; "The Masque of the Red Death" is the polychromatic exception that proves the rule.

The pedantic innocence of these remarks is rather touching. Mr. Levin's solemn assumption of significance, the total absence from his prose of any hint of irony about the fragility, the tentativeness, the dubious and peripheral importance of evidence of this order, his very use of the term "statistical investigation," disclose his failure to conceive of literature in any essentially critical, discriminating way. Writing about *Typee,* for example, he stops to remark that the narrator is welcomed by Polynesian women "with jet-black tresses," as if this had some special meaning, as if there might be blond Polynesians hiding in the coconut trees, or something exceptional about dark haired ones. Or, referring to Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea,* Mr. Levin portentously extracts a passage in which the old man speaks of how the sun's reflecting off the sea hurts his eyes and how he welcomes the relief of dusk—as if literature never came near the naked irreducible facts of experience and there were nothing in it that should not be assimilated to this chromatic metaphysics. With perfect seriousness he finds this to say about Hawthorne: "Why should this blackness, which lifted for the philosopher, have settled again so heavily on the romancer? The year he spent measuring coal in the port of Boston will not suffice to explain it." In short, Mr. Levin appears to have practically no sense of what is relevant or irrelevant. Had Hawthorne ever shoveled snow in a blizzard, measured flour in a grocery or dieted on black-eyed peas or black-strap molasses we would have been informed of that too. For to Mr. Levin all things are of equal, indistinguishable weight and cogency. Like Polonius's cloud, which was humped like a camel, backed like a weasel, and very like a whale, the blackness he discovers is amiably protean; a black horse, a black night, a head of black hair, all or any of them, regardless of the context in which they appear, have a uniformly powerful authority of value. There is no surer way of reducing a thesis to absurdity.

But one more example ought to be enough:

The symbolism of terror is universal. Otherwise, Death would not ride a pale horse in Scripture, and the Ancient Mariner would never have been bedeviled by an albatross. The glitter of Antarctic snow and ice . . . was the single mystery that Poe had left unresolved. W. H. Hudson would explain it as animism, "the mind's projection of itself into nature," our predisposition to be terrified by the exceptional. This may account for the stimulus it lends to visions or hallucinations like that of Hans

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Castorp in *The Magic Mountain*. One effect of taking mescaline, Henri Michaux has recently testified. ... .

And so on into the night. It is one thing to have an organic sensibility, to apprehend that correspondences between the outward and physical forms of things often mark inward and spiritual similarities; it is another to be at the same time incapable of seeing that certain words, images or ideas which resemble each other from a verbal or mechanical point of view are in fact incommensurate. By the time one finishes Mr. Levin's book one has lost all confidence in his formless organicism, and feels that his conception, which initially seemed quite plausible, has been inflated out of existence. A literary critic is not a Hegel; his job is not to tie up the world in a pink ribbon—or a black and white one for that matter—to describe everything as a function of everything else. And had Hegel himself read Mr. Levin's book he would, I think, have found himself once more in that night in which all cows are black.

Although Mr. Levin's failure is a failure of intellect, his book, unlike those of Mr. Kenner and Mr. Geismar, is not solely a curiosity. He does make interesting comments, but these are mostly by-blows and incidental, bits of insights that fly out from the whirring centrifuge of his method. Could he have managed to suppress about half of his "evidence," could he have restrained the pedantic impulse to set down everything that came to mind, to drop names as if they were hot potatoes, and to make as many associations as possible all the time; could he have remembered that great literature is not written by dormitory metaphysicians, that its systems are partial, fragmentary, full of cross-purposes and contradictions, and that criticism is neither a detective agency nor a census bureau; could he have done all this it is conceivable that his particular intellectual gifts might not have drawn him so irretrievably into the failures of method and manner which make his book so finally unenlightening.

Though these three books represent the outer limits of American criticism and are so different from each other, they share one quality: they are all excessive and extravagant. Each suffers from an unbalancing commitment to a radically distorted and distorting point of view—from an obsession. And the very fact of such books expresses something about our society and culture. We are still, as Matthew Arnold said of us seventy-five years ago, a provincial and decentralized society, a society without a center of cultural intelligence and sanity; and that Mr. Levin should write his deeply eccentric and provincial book from a "center" like Harvard is exactly to the point. It is not that our kind of culture, out of its violent oppositions and devastating obsessions, can-

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not breed a distinctive literature—it can and does, which is precisely the thesis Richard Chase argues so commandingly. But the dissipation of talent, the desolation of intellect, the regard for trivia that are so notable in these three books are equally facts of its existence. These books are not so much comments on the state of our literature and society as they are expressions of the permanent conditions within them against which centrality of intelligence, balance of mind and maturity of value must continue to make their way.

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BOOKS

POETRY CHRONICLE

FIGHTING TERMS. By Thom Gunn. Hawks Well Press. $.75.
THE LESS DECEIVED. By Philip Larkin. St. Martin's Press. $3.00.
A CRACKLING OF THORNS. By John Hollander. Yale University Press. $3.00.
OVERLAND TO THE ISLANDS. By Denise Levertov. Jonathan Williams. $2.75.
SEEING IS BELIEVING. By Charles Tomlinson. McDowell, Obolensky. $3.00.

Since the war England has produced very few poets and a great deal of what with mildness and generosity would be called "literary history": movements and counter-movements, schools, trends and influences. That is to say, less affectionately, it has been racked by gang warfare. And rather more energy seems to have gone into the fighting and the simplified battle propaganda than into the poetry itself. Less than a century ago Henry James was berating America for lacking England's civilized amenities; for the writers at least, the position is now fairly reversed. England has no quarterlies, no *Partisan,* no *Kenyon,* no *Hudson,* no *Sewanee,* no Creative Writing courses, no Foundations, no Fellowships, no Gauss Seminars, no Writers Conferences, no Schools of Letters, and precious few little magazines and highbrow paperbacks. Since the demise of *Scrutiny,* there are only three big periodicals with literary aspirations and money enough to appear regularly, and two of those are mere rag-bags; that leaves *The Twentieth Century.* Finally, there is only one literary center in England—London, and over that the ex-poets of the 'thirties brood like the fog. No wonder the young men are angry.

Out of all this two excellent poets have, almost surprisingly, emerged: Thom Gunn and Philip Larkin. They are both original writers and both represent a new type or a new tone in modern verse. Yet it is new without any of the experimental gimmicks of modernism. Both poets use more or less regular verse forms and both avoid the inchoate rhetoric that passed for poetry in the roaring 'forties. Neither, in short, are Dylan Thomists. Yet if they are traditional, it is only because, as someone has said, it is a tradition in English poetry to be intelligent.

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Thom Gunn's *Fighting Terms* was first published in England in 1954, when the author was about 24. It is, for my money, the most impressive first book of poems since Robert Lowell's. Though 1954 was before the craze began, Mr. Gunn is in a sense an "angry" poet. His anger, however, has nothing to do with the social snobberies that plague John Osborne's heroes. It is more a matter of smelling out and analyzing that sense of violence which underlies the inertia of contemporary England. Occasionally the violence gets the better of him; Mr. Gunn's verse can be crude at times, too aggressive, too heroic. But that, in a way, adds to the power: he is a poet who is at least willing to lay himself open and risk his poise in order to say his say. There is, in fact, a great vitality in his poems that makes Mr. Gunn sound, in a wholly contemporary way, rather like Donne. Not the orthodox Donne, as created by Cleanth Brooks, all dandified logic, contrived conceits and an irony so refined as to be humorless; but the Donne who, out of impatience with the pieties of Elizabethan verse, changed the language of poetry to suit his own colloquial intelligence. Mr. Gunn, at his best, has the same tough and peculiarly open liveliness of mind; he has the same rhythmical arrogance:

> *. . . came to her in different shape*
> *Than to Europa, Danae, Leda.*
> *Paris. He was a man. And yet . . .*

Above all, he has the same ability to present the shock of experience in an image which works as a kind of complex dramatic situation:

> *The huge wound in my head began to heal*
> *About the beginning of the seventh week.*
> *Its valleys darkened, its villages became still:*
> *For joy I did not move and dared not speak . . .*

His business is then, like Donne's, to use his full, quizzical poetic intelligence in order that the complexities may play themselves out in their own terms. But there is no point in quoting at length. *Fighting Terms* is available for 75 cents. Anyone who doesn't buy it is simply not interested in the best poetry of the 'fifties.

In comparison, Philip Larkin's *The Less Deceived* does not have that sense of potentiality. Mr. Larkin is older than Mr. Gunn and his style has already crystallized out. This is, in short, as little the conventional first volume of poems as *Harmonium*. It has a finish and a perfection in its own terms, like that of Graves or Frost, which comes partly from the high level of technical accomplishment and partly from

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the poet's knowing precisely his own limitations. Mr. Larkin's poems, in fact, are about this sense of limitation, and his reputation in England is based on it. For he has caught perfectly the wan, underpaid, overtaxed hopelessness that has smothered the country since the war; the sourness of talent without possibilities, the gradual leveling down of all standards to the neutral weariness of enlightened suburbanism. This is Mr. Larkin's theme and he manages to be very witty about it:

Sometimes you hear, fifth-hand
As epitaph:
He chucked up everything
And just cleared off,
And always the voice will sound
Certain you approve
This audacious, purifying,
Elemental move.

And they are right, I think.
We all hate home
And having to be there:
I detest my room,
Its specially chosen junk,
The good books, the good bed,
And my life, in perfect order:
So to hear it said

He walked out on the whole crowd
Leaves me flushed and stirred,
Like Then she undid her dress
Or Take that you bastard;
Surely I can, if he did?
And that helps me stay
Sober and industrious.
But I'd go today,

Yes, swagger the nut-strewn roads,
Crouch in the fo'c'sle
Stubbly with goodness, if
It weren't so artificial,
Such a deliberate step backwards
To create an object:

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Books; china; a life
Reprehensibly perfect.

What, I think, is most impressive about this is less the unassuming liveliness of some of the language—"Crouch in the fo'c'sle/Stubbly with goodness," etc.—than a certain air the thing has: a mixture of considerable poetic precision and considerable offhandness. Mr. Larkin's achievement, in fact, is not to have mapped out any great new continent of poetry; it is simply to have created a tone of voice for the time: sour, mildly sardonic, determinedly unsentimental (though in his serious poems he is often sentimental about his lack of sentiment). It is nonsense to call the young men angry. Most of them are simply depressed.

Finding his own tone of voice is one of Mr. John Hollander's preoccupations in *A Crackling of Thorns*. He tries on a number of styles before, by way of Auden's, he manages to fashion his own. And his own is the "New York witty." He is bright and quick with ideas and clever with words, one of the few young poets who can pun without setting one's teeth on edge. This he manages in all sorts of ways; he puns straight:

You have unmade your bed, now lie about it.

(*a propos* of a divorce); or literary:

. . . the wind, increasing,
Sands teeth, sands eyes, sands taste, sands everything.";

or polyglot:

And the roaring of the sand's edge,
Tunditur unda,
Thundering under . . .

About his puns and about the elaborate metrical tasks he sets himself, Mr. Hollander has an admirable "Look, no hands" air. He is, technically, a skillful writer, but he has at times a certain difficulty in finding enough to be skillful about. He can fill out any lighter, lyric form with a good deal of *élan*:

And so in every age we find
Each Jack, destroying every Joan,
Divides and conquers womankind
In vengeance for his missing bone.
By day he spins out quaint conceits
With gossip, flattery, and song,

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But then at night, between the sheets,
He wrongs the girl to right the wrong.

But Mr. Hollander seems to have got so much into the habit of saying just one thing at a time—however great his style and ingenuity—that in his serious poems he seems to go round his points more than he progresses through them:

. . . What,
Then, if we tremble a little? To understand
Exactly what it means to shiver, when
We have grown used to the chilly air, is, then,
Perhaps to know that our knowledge of what is true
Of the world casts doubt on what we thought we knew
About ourselves, or at least on how it was
We came to know it . . .

There is a shadowy area in which discursive meditation begins to sound very like rambling; Mr. Hollander sometimes lingers there longer than he can afford. There are two other minor irritants in his book: first, an occasional air of super-cultivation—e.g. good poems with affected titles and/or Eliot-like quotations at their heads, and sly poems more about other sly poems than about actual situations; Mr. Hollander is so clearly well-read that he could easily insist upon it less. Second, he has rewritten, without quite parodying, poems by Shakespeare and Marvell. This is simply bad strategy: a poet can usefully rewrite bad or mediocre poems—it is good exercise, like translating—but when he goes at the masterpieces he exposes himself to standards which are hard to survive. These irritants apart, however, Mr. Hollander is an elegant, accomplished technician, with wit and a very good ear, who, if he does not seem about to write the Great American Poem, might at least produce a brilliant libretto.

Miss Denise Levertov is said to be the best of San Francisco's Beat poets. Since the other candidates are Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso and Lawrence Ferlinghetti, no one will deny her the title. And even without pushing against that open door, she is a writer of some talent:

Mushrooms firm, cold;
tussocks of dark grass, gleam of webs,
turf soft and cropped. Quiet and early. And no valley,

no hills: clouds about our knees, tendrils
of cloud in our hair. Wet scrags

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of wool caught in barbed wire, gorse
looming, without scent.

It is sensitive, accurate, vivid and, considering she confines herself fairly strictly to the Imagists' language of things, intensely personal. But though the matter is her own, the means are someone else's. There is hardly a poem in *Overland to the Islands* which could not, with very little trouble, be transplanted into the works of William Carlos Williams. Admittedly, that kind of romanticism of things demands a peculiarly intimate fusion between the poet and whatever he is writing about. Since Miss Levertov is willing to make this effort, it is a shame that she will not take the next step into a language of her own. Perhaps the San Francisco scene has something to do with her timidity, for the extraordinary thing about the Beat Generation is the degree to which they are old-fashioned. They seem to feel they have to be "modern," and "modern" simply means going through the ritual experiments that were already dated by the mid-'twenties. It is, after all, time someone explained to Mr. Ginsberg that Whitman and Vachel Lindsay are not so very *avant-garde*. Similarly, with Miss Levertov: the older generation did not experiment simply to seem advanced, they were also trying to discover the precise form to fit their originality. When, therefore, she takes over ready-made a medium as experimentally individual as Dr. Williams's, Miss Levertov is defeating the whole purpose of the form. There is a sharpness to her perceptions that certainly sounds like originality, but she has not quite found her own way of expressing it.

Other men's clothes and habits also get in the way of one's appreciation of Mr. Charles Tomlinson's *Seeing Is Believing*. On the dust jacket Professor Hugh Kenner comments: "In 1914 an American poet was professionally illiterate if he wasn't reading contemporary French poetry; today a British poet is equally provincial who doesn't incorporate into his art what has been achieved in the past thirty-five years by Americans. Charles Tomlinson is the first Englishman to have thoroughly grasped the implications of this fact. Consequently he is the most original poet to come along in a generation . . ." If there is a hiatus in the professor's logic, it may perhaps be because he is not being wholly frank. It would be more accurate to say that Mr. Tomlinson is the first English writer to be heavily influenced by Wallace Stevens. Granted, Stevens is a hard master: a poet must have a good ear for blank verse and considerable rhetorical control in order to follow him. Even so, he runs risks:

Leaf-dapples sharpen. Emboldened by this clarity

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The minds of artificers would turn prismatic,
Running on lace perforated in crisp wafers
That could cut like steel. Constitutions,
Drafted under this fecund chill, would be annulled
For the strictness of their equity, the moderation of their pity.

The question is, quite simply, whether or not all those polysyllabics are really necessary. Are they demanded by the subject or by the Stevens manner? Stevens could manage this kind of rhetoric because running under it all was an insistent, needling worry about the ways of the imagination. Mr. Tomlinson, on the other hand, seems concerned merely with the technical difficulties of translating his landscapes into abstractions. He intellectualizes around them with a certain aplomb, and occasionally, when he allows the scenes to emerge by themselves, he produces some admirably unruffled decorative verse—see "Farewell to Van Gogh." But there is something static about most of it. The poems seem to end in the air, rather frayed, as though he continually left out that last stanza which gathers all the threads together. The polysyllabics, in short, suggest nice intellectual discriminations, but the quickening disturbance which would make them valid and transform the rhetoric into poetry is just not there.

Mr. Tomlinson might learn something from Howard Nemerov's *Mirrors and Windows*. Mr. Nemerov is a relatively low-pressure poet, who is good precisely to the degree to which he avoids large claims:

Salmon can manage, and the comedian crow
can do his turn, even the cat can rise,
a natural, into grace; but as for us,
not fish, not flesh, not fowl, our ecstasies
are never groundless . . .

His witty, unemphatic intelligence is, in itself, a relief. More important, however, it seems always to be based on a kind of sense of human fact; he writes poetry for reasons more personal and immediate than the mere desire to poeticize.

Alfred Alvarez

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"TO THINK WHAT WE ARE DOING!"

THE HUMAN CONDITION. By Hannah Arendt. University of Chicago Press. $4.75.

Miss Hannah Arendt is a puzzling writer for some of our intellectuals: she thinks. To be an intellectual and to think are, unfortunately, no longer one and the same thing; and we may even ask whether the tendency hasn't been growing, and in certain circles not so far from us, to drive the two further and further apart. To pass muster as an intellectual one need only have a stock of encapsulated ideas and the facile agility to bat them back and forth like so many tennis balls; and some intellectuals seem never to suspect that the ideas they bounce so dexterously may be very ready-made and prefabricated items of sporting gear. To think—in the sense of letting loose a certain chain of ideas, letting them be and grow on their own, much as a good painter has to let the painting grow day by day under a patient and watchful gaze—this is a far cry from the glittering battlecock and shuttledore of intellectual chatter; it happens to be just such a deed of thinking that Miss Arendt launches in her new book, *The Human Condition,* a really superb work, one of the best interpretations of contemporary history that has appeared in years.

Naturally, thinking—in this way that Miss Arendt sets about it—makes her text rather difficult and obscure to many readers. Yet her text, taken sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph, and even page by page, is crystal clear: the difficulty ensues only in trying to grasp her message as a whole—that is, to boil it down to something much more easily manageable by our ordinary stock ideas. But this difficulty seems to me prefectly in order if we grant the complexity and depth of the process of thought she has launched; a work of thought, real thought that attempts to recast our concepts themselves, is bound to defy any encapsulating summary. Miss Arendt is a woman with a richly intuitive mind and from page to page there are wonderful buttressing insights that can, however, stop the rapid reader in his tracks and make the going more difficult. You cannot afford even to overlook her footnotes, where she is just as likely as not to drop one more interesting and important observation. Given the nature of Miss Arendt's task, the complaints which I have heard about her difficulty and obcurity seem to me at once beside the point and yet perfectly inevitable.

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One other aspect of her difficulty is the very largeness of her subject: Miss Arendt is attempting to examine the various interpretations throughout history that man has made of the *vita activa,* the life of action, and this involves her in the correlated analyses of the life of thought, of labor, and fabrication. This is a tremendous and fundamental philosophic enterprise, which involves her not only in an attempt to understand the most fundamental verbs in the language—to do, to make, to think, to be—but also in a painstaking historical examination of the historical vicissitudes of these verbs in the course of Western history. Hegel was the first philosopher who attempted to understand man in relation to his labor; and Marx, taking off from him, made a philosophic reinterpretation of man that has transformed the whole of contemporary history. Miss Arendt thinks (and, I believe, rightly) that the ideas of Hegel and Marx on these subjects have to be fundamentally recast if we are to make any headway in understanding ourselves and our contemporary situation. Clearly, hers is one of the most ambitious books to have appeared anywhere recently, and the fact that she has been able to bring it off at all is a measure of the primary importance of this work. Behind it I sense a great indebtedness to the thought of Heidegger, but this debt is simply a groundwork on which she builds, and Miss Arendt's mind is very much her own.

Having said that the book in its richness defies any encapsulating summary, I shall now nevertheless have to contradict myself by attempting one for the reader's convenience:

With the Greeks, in the era before the philosophers, the life of action was considered the supreme type of human life, the highest and best way that a man might live; the life of labor was confined to slaves and therefore, as servile, lacked the dignity necessary for a free man; production, the fabricating of objects, belonged to the artisan, who, although not a slave, occupied a lower place in the hierarchy of Greek values; as for the life of contemplative reason, it did not yet exist, for the simple enough fact that philosophic reason itself had not yet come into existence. When Pindar speaks of a man's immortalizing himself, it is through *deeds* that he understands this to be accomplished: an athlete wins an immortal victory at the Olympic games, a soldier makes himself remembered by an act of courage on the field of battle, a politician delivers a great harangue at a decisive moment in the life of his people—or a poet, for that matter, performs the deed of writing a great ode. With the advent of Plato and philosophy, however, all these values become transvalued, for the life of action takes place in the realm of time, which has an inferior reality than does eternity, and it is only pure

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theoretical reason, the contemplative life of the philosopher, that can lay hold of the real reality.

Despite the fact that Christianity was a movement among the laboring classes, and that Christianity itself gave a new dignity to the humbler tasks of living (had not the Savior himself been a carpenter), nevertheless the valuation of the contemplative life over that of action, labor, or production continues, and is even strengthened by being allied with a religious mysticism.

It is not till the beginning of the modern period, in the Renaissance, that this traditional scheme of values becomes fundamentally altered: the modern period in history is one in which man comes to understand himself more and more as *homo faber,* man the maker, the producer of tools and artifacts. Reason itself becomes a mere adjunct to or instrument in the process of producing objects. What Miss Arendt ends with is the thoroughly problematic situation of modern man, in which this valuation of man the maker has run rampant and been collectivized, until now with the advent of automation we face the prospect of a society in which labor may be reduced to a minimum, but the leisure to which the great masses will be delivered up offers them no longer the goals of a life of contemplation, or a life which believes in the possibility of great actions. As Miss Arendt puts it somberly: "It is quite conceivable that the modern age—which began with such an unprecedented and promising outburst of human activity—may end in the deadliest, most sterile passivity history has ever known."

The somberness of these words has nothing to do with any of the passionate jeremiads against modernity that have appeared in recent years. Miss Arendt writes, rather, with the detachment and austerity of real contemplation—a contemplation that seeks to watch with clear and open eyes all the forces that are at work upon us in this moment of history. Notice that she speaks above of a "possibility"—which means that there are also other possibilities open and other forces at work. Miss Arendt knows too well that the situation of man is always so problematic that it can never be ticketed off in any neat prognosis.

I am unable at this point to offer any "criticisms" of Miss Arendt's ideas, for I am still in the process of digesting them. Though I have read the book twice for the purposes of this review, I know I shall be studying it for the next year or so, and each time there will be more illumination to be had and more things to see and understand.

William Barrett

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"LAND OF PLENTY"

THE AFFLUENT SOCIETY. By John Galbraith. Houghton Mifflin. $4.00.

Why do we go on fussing about greater efficiency and higher production when, in the U.S. at least, the extra output consists merely of yet more elaborate tail fins on even longer cars, or of frippery gadgets which we were not even conscious of wanting until we were stimulated by high-powered advertising? It is this apparently absurd paradox, and its causes and consequences, which form the theme of Professor Galbraith's new book. It was natural, he argues, to be obsessed with production in an age of poverty, privation, and hunger, when the masses lacked even the basic necessities of life. It is ridiculous to be equally obsessed today, when poverty has given way to affluence, the ordinary American citizen enjoys amenities which not even the rich enjoyed a century ago, and marginal output consists of goods that by any standards are patently inessential. To assert, in this condition of opulence, that growth and efficiency are still of paramount importance seems an oddly irrelevant notion; yet it is one which continues to form part of the ruling American ethos.

How are we to explain this continued preoccupation with production under such changed conditions? Galbraith suggests three reasons. First, we are still subconsciously dominated by the ideas of the past, and notably by the scarcity tradition of classical economics. I doubt myself whether this hangover effect is as potent as he supposes. However, the point is in no way essential to his argument.

Secondly, he adduces a much more subtle reason. One of the tensions to which classical capitalism gave rise was the class bitterness and sense of injustice associated with great inequalities of income. This tension has, in contemporary America, largely disappeared; and the traditional dispute over equality is in abeyance.

This is primarily the consequence of the remarkable rise in the standard of living of the masses. Galbraith gives a brilliant exposition of a point to which I have long attached importance in the context of the British social system: namely, that the higher the average level of real income, whatever its distribution, the greater the subjective sense of social equality. A poor man will feel bitterly the contrast between his privation and the lavish expenditures of the rich. But the American worker today, enjoying a car, a deep freeze, and an annual holiday in

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Florida—what does he care if the rich have candles at dinner, and Matisses, and Chippendale furniture, and expensive jewelry, and even two Cadillacs and an annual holiday at Cannes? He no longer feels deprived; and hence he no longer feels a bitter sense of inequality. But the change in his attitudes, and the consequent decline in social tension, are due entirely to the rapid economic growth which has made possible his higher standard of living. Hence it is that liberals have given so high a priority to economic growth. However, from this point of view the insistence on high production has fulfilled its historic function; for the decline in tension is not likely to be reversed even if the American rate of growth is now allowed to slacken.

But the third traditional reason for the obsession with production is a continuing one. This is what Galbraith calls the security motive. The main cause of insecurity in an industrial economy is unemployment. In order to eliminate insecurity, therefore, we accept the goal of full employment. But full employment is naturally associated with maximum production. The marginal production is needed not for its own sake, but for the sake of the marginal employment associated with it; for on this depends the worker's income and security. We are thus in the paradoxical position of giving first priority to maximum production, even though society scarcely needs the extra goods, simply in order to avoid exposing individuals to the hardships of unemployment.

Such, then, are the traditional reasons, now either dated or paradoxical, for the preoccupation with production in the affluent society. But, says Galbraith, the champions of production, feeling subconsciously dissatisfied, have now thought up two new reasons. The first concerns defense. They argue that military strength is a function of gross national product, from which it follows that to resist the Soviet threat we must aim at the maximum rate of economic growth. The Sputniks have by now rather discredited this simple view; and in any case Galbraith adduces other arguments to show, convincingly in my view, that the absolute size of the economy is by no means the decisive influence on military capacity.

The second new justification, he asserts, is the modern economist's theory of demand, according to which one cannot accurately compare the satisfactions which consumers derive from different levels of expenditure at different periods of time. Now Galbraith gives an accurate account of this theory; but he is wrong in supposing that it was either intended to demonstrate, or has in fact been used to demonstrate, that production today was as urgent as production one hundred years ago. However, we can leave him to argue this out with his fellow academi-

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cians, since the point has no decisive bearing on his main argument. And of course he is right in assuming, on quite nontheoretical common sense grounds, that wants, and hence production, do become less urgent (in some sense) the more amply the individual is supplied with goods.

Unfortunately, in his anxiety to cripple his imaginary opponent, Galbraith at this point greatly overstates his own case. He argues that a high proportion of production today is satisfying not "genuine" or spontaneous wants, such as the need for food or clothing or shelter, but purely artificial wants—that is, wants which would not exist were they not created, contrived, or stimulated by advertising and sales promotion. Since they need to be thus contrived, it follows that they cannot be at all urgent.

Now this seems to me a dangerous argument. If we were speaking merely of longer tail fins on longer cars, or titivating fripperies and novelties, then well and good. But there is surely more to it than that. Almost all wants above the basic minimum of essential food, clothing and shelter are in some way artificially stimulated—are they therefore to be considered as of no significance?

Let us take some examples. The demand for a greater variety and higher standards of food, clothing and housing is induced, not by innate need—the savage does not have it—but by the conventional expectations of the society: is it therefore to be considered as not worth satisfying? In most countries, a large proportion of the population feels little want for education, and the want has to be not merely stimulated but actually enforced by compulsory state education: are we then to say that the provision of education is not urgent? The spontaneous demand for typhoid or diphtheria immunization is manifestly weak, and must be fortified by government publicity campaigns: is it therefore to be brushed aside as inessential? I was not conscious, at the age of 18, of an innate want to enjoy opera or painting; then the want was stimulated in me by outside influences, much to my subsequent contentment: is the want less real because I once was not aware of it? Even in the field of commercial want-creation, it is of course true that the demand for (say) domestic cookers, refrigerators, washing machines, and the like was artificially contrived by advertising: but has it not been beneficial thus to reduce drudgery and increase domestic leisure? Clearly, the whole distinction between innate and created wants in terms of urgency or welfare is a most uncertain one.

However, although the distinction plays a prominent part in Galbraith's argument, it is not in fact essential to it. All we need to do is make the perfectly convincing common sense judgment that marginal

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production in affluent America today, whether it is satisfying spontaneous or created wants, is in general much less urgent, and would be so considered by the bulk of the population, than was marginal production one hundred years ago.

But are there no further arguments for the preoccupation with production, other than those mentioned by Galbraith? In Britain, of course, there are, simply because our level of affluence is lower. But this in no way contradicts Galbraith's argument, since the case for or against the production objective in the U.S. has nothing to do with conditions in Britain.

But what of the impoverished peoples of Asia, Africa and South America? Clearly they themselves are right to be preoccupied with higher output, battling as they still are with the age old problems of privation, hunger and insecurity. But does their wretched condition not affect the argument about production in the U.S.? Galbraith does not discuss this point explicitly; but his answer would, I think, be this. The U.S. should indeed sustain a generous program of foreign aid. But in practice the limitation on foreign aid is not the level of American production, but a complex of electoral and political attitudes; therefore additional production would not lead to more foreign aid.

Now this, though certainly true at the present time, is not a sufficient answer; for Galbraith himself makes many proposals for altering these underlying factors—he does not accept existing limitations as immutable. Let us suppose that he is successful, and the limitations are removed. Would there then not be a case for seeking the maximum rate of economic growth, and transferring the additional output to the underdeveloped areas? On any economic welfare grounds, the answer is unquestionably yes. Marginal output would then consist not of longer tail fins on longer cars, but of wheat for India, steel for Indonesia, machinery for Ghana. The case for maximum production would be precisely as strong as it was one hundred years ago, and for precisely the same reasons—to combat poverty and privation. Galbraith's argument thus rests wholly on the supposition that the American problem is, for whatever reason, to be treated in isolation. American marginal output is indeed of merely trivial importance to Americans; but to less affluent Asia or Africa it must seem, could it only be transferred there, of desperate significance.

However, it may be that in practice the effective limitation on foreign aid will continue to be not the size of the national product, but other, noneconomic factors, and that the choice facing the U.S. can therefore be discussed in terms which abstract from the problems of

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Asia and Africa. On this assumption Galbraith's argument remains valid.

But he now advances the argument a further stage; for he goes on to assert that the obsession with production is not merely illogical in the affluent society, but brings in its train two major evils. (I omit a rather dubious argument about the volume of consumer debt.)

First, the United States displays an appalling lack of balance between private goods and public goods: on the one hand, a copious profusion of cars, washing machines, deep freezes, and private swimming pools, on the other hand a most niggardly provision of schools, playgrounds, roads, police and mental hospitals. The result is a disturbing incidence of crime, juvenile delinquency, accidents, congestion, urban sprawl, ignorance and ugliness. This situation Galbraith attributes, for a number of detailed reasons, to the preoccupation with production.

All Americans will recognize the situation thus described. But can it be thus attributed? I am inclined to doubt it. I think rather that the proportion of income which different countries are prepared to surrender to the state for communal spending is a function of essentially noneconomic social and psychological attitudes—a tradition of strong or weak government, the strength of individualism, the extent of the ideology of private enterprise, psychological attitudes toward taxation, and so on. The U.S., Germany and Sweden all attach great importance to economic efficiency and rapid growth; yet they have quite different attitudes to social planning and the provision of public goods. This suggests that the explanation is to be looked for in the social and cultural tradition of the country concerned, and not in its relative degree of affluence.

In fact I agree strongly with all of Galbraith's imaginative proposals for correcting the social imbalance in the United States; from a practical viewpoint these are perhaps the most important in the book. But they are not, in my view, strictly relevant to his main thesis.

The second evil is inflation. Galbraith states the conventional case for supposing that full employment inevitably entails inflation. If on the other hand we could run the economy on a looser rein, allowing some slack and unemployment, we could then achieve price stability. But the consequent unemployment, as we saw above, would involve a painful insecurity and loss of income. To resolve this dilemma, Galbraith proposes a most ingenious scheme—which might well be desirable irrespective of this particular argument—of graduated unemployment compensation, designed to maintain incomes during unemployment. In this way, he argues, we should both achieve price stability, and also neatly extricate ourselves from the absurd paradox of seeking maximum

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production, not because we want the extra goods, but to provide the incomes of the extra workers.

I am not wholly convinced of the existence of the evil, still less of the desirability of the cure. It has yet to be definitely proved that we cannot run a full employment economy without inflation. I myself am moderately hopeful that we can, given certain not impossible conditions. But at the very least the evil remains unproven.

As for the cure, we must not forget that there are important advantages to running the economy at a full employment level of demand. For example, you then allow people, for the first time, an area of choice between work and leisure; and this I regard as a great enlargement of human freedom. You may sustain the unemployed worker's income as fully as you will; but you are still depriving him of the choice between working and not working. Similarly in other cases: a high level of demand permits the worker a choice between overtime and free week ends, the married woman a choice between going out to work or not, the older man a choice between retiring or staying on at work. It is not enough to compensate the lack of choice by bountiful pensions or unemployment benefits; for people like to work for many other reasons than the income. There are also other important advantages to running the economy fairly hard; but for reasons of space I must omit them.

None of this means that I at all dissent from the major proposition that additional output is now of much less urgency, and should be relegated to a lower position in our scale of values. It is only that I would prefer to give effect to the altered scale of values, not by running the economy at half cock, but simply by giving—as Galbraith also wants to do—a much higher priority to noneconomic relative to economic values whenever the two conflict. Goodness knows that there are plenty of opportunities, many of which Galbraith describes. We could, for example, when arguing about taxation questions, the location of industry, labor mobility, and the status of the worker in his factory, instead of treating efficiency always as the main criterion, give precedence to social and psychological considerations. We could lighten the burden of toil, make work more agreeable, and increase the possibilities of leisure. We could spend more on education and the social services. We could be more lavish with the arts and more generous to culture. And, not least, we could release for more fundamental tasks some of the scarce human talent which now has to fuss about incentives and the balance of payments and higher productivity.

All this I find intensely sympathetic. In the United States, I wrote some years ago, "it seems absurd to speak as though economic efficiency

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were the central issue; provided always that full employment was maintained, a reformer could turn his main attention to noneconomic problems without worrying too much about the rate of growth. . . . We shall turn our attention increasingly to other, and in the long run more important, spheres—of personal freedom, happiness, and cultural endeavor: the cultivation of leisure, beauty, grace, gaiety, excitement, and of all the proper pursuits, whether elevated, vulgar, or eccentric, which contribute to the varied fabric of a full private and family life."[1]

I am therefore wholeheartedly a Galbraith disciple. I disagree with some of the steps in his argument. But the great merit of his book is that the argument has detailed steps at all. Many economists have lifted their eyes, in a visionary last chapter, to the coming age of abundance; even more sociologists have inveighed vaguely against the affluent society. But Galbraith is the first writer to attempt a systematic economic analysis of such a society. This is therefore an important and original work, in which the author demonstrates, not for the first time, his ability to stand back, well out of the rut, examine with a vivacious mind the currently accepted dogmas, and inquire, at once pertinently and impertinently, whether they are valid.

C. A. R. Crosland

ATTITUDES TO HISTORY

SOVIET MARXISM: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS. By Herbert Marcuse. Columbia University Press. $4.50.

The main point of Mr. Marcuse's book is that Soviet Marxism represents a coherent theory consistent with Leninism and the earlier body of Marxist doctrine. Mr. Marcuse also argues that the lines of Soviet development are on the whole in keeping with the expectations of Marxian theory.

No doubt some Marxist objectives have persisted in the Soviet Union. Marcuse is quite right, for instance, in asserting that the long range objective of Soviet agricultural policy has been to establish "complete socialist property on the land, total mechanization, and assimilation of urban and rural labor and life." But such basic aims as the dissolution of the family, the elimination of religion, the equalization of

1. *The Future of Socialism.* Macmillan, 1957.

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reward and opportunity, and the withering away of the state have been put into storage, although they are occasionally taken out for airing. Mr. Marcuse can maintain his position only by very careful and quite arbitrary selection of examples, though even these can be made to fit the pattern only by the most tortuous analysis. Indeed, Mr. Marcuse has the exasperating tendency of regularly leaving his reader in complete confusion as to whether a given passage represents what Soviet theorists actually *say,* or what they don't say but *mean,* or what Mr. Marcuse thinks they *really* are saying, or what *he himself* thinks.

Since Marcuse is not a Soviet apologist, it is difficult to fathom why he bothers to attempt to square Soviet developments with the original Marxist doctrine. One is tempted to conclude that his concern to prove that the Soviet Union is in the vise of history arises mainly from his being himself in the grip of the idea of historical determinism. He acknowledges that there is nothing automatic in the historical process: it develops "through the actions of men." But having paid obeisance to this fact, he proceeds to ignore it.

If we see the Soviet Union through Mr. Marcuse's eyes we must accept the decision to industrialize Russia *rapidly,* to telescope stages of development, as he puts it, as an historical command. Neither the leaders nor any other group has it within their discretion or power to shift that course, and any attempt to do so is bound to fail unless "objective factors" confirm and verify the new course. Furthermore, if the objective factors required it, the new course would be forced on the leaders. So we return to the ultimate cause, the "objective factors of the international and domestic situation." And since everything is historically determined, we obviously must be very cautious about sitting in moral judgment.

With an unerring sense of direction Marcuse seems to find all the pitfalls into which determinists generally stumble. Most characteristic is the determinist's tendency to define a crucial political decision as an "objective fact," and then treat it as though it were in a class with such things as climate, mineral resources, and population. A political decision is, of course, an objective fact once it is taken, especially as it begins to have social consequences. Nevertheless, at one time it was some man's decision, subject to the same evaluation as are other human decisions.

The fact is that rapid industrialization was undertaken because Stalin decided on it, and through his control over the Communist apparatus imposed his decision on the party and the nation. Many Communist theoreticians and economists actually preferred a lower rate of

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industrialization, which Stalin himself had earlier favored. History defined only the *conditions,* in the sense that at any given time and place there are only certain material, human and social resources available. But this is not the same as defining the *alternatives* of action. Those were defined by men through the interpretations they made of existing conditions; and many alternatives were possible within the given historic situation. To fail to see that what happened in Soviet society resulted from the distinctive way in which the Bolsheviks—and Stalin—defined their alternatives and made their choices, is to miss one of the central points of the Soviet experience. It is striking that the idea of responsibility seems not to figure at all in Mr. Marcuse's thinking: at least it is nowhere mentioned in his book. Man's conscience has here been delegated to history.

Mr. Marcuse justifies this approach on the grounds that we cannot effectively criticize Soviet Marxism from "outside," since such an attack will be "easily blunted by the argument that its conceptual foundations have been undermined by the Marxist transition into a different area of historical and theoretical verification." To understand Soviet Marxism we must, of course, get inside it; but to criticize it, we can perfectly well stand outside it. This is the only way we can maintain any historical and moral perspective for judging Communist acts.

Even accepting the rather arbitrary limitation imposed by the method of what Mr. Marcuse calls the "immanent critique," we might have expected more incisive criticism and more penetrating analysis. Some of the Yugoslav and Polish efforts to evaluate Soviet Marxism in strictly Marxist terms are much more incisive and effective than anything offered by Mr. Marcuse. Indeed he often comes through more unambiguously in his critical analysis of Western life and society than he does in his analysis of the Soviet Union. And he does so by applying rather different criteria, always stressing the gap between the ideal and the achieved in Western society while generally restricting his evaluation of the Soviet case to the stated ideal.

Alex Inkeles

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CONSERVATISM FOR THE SALON

SOVEREIGNTY: AN INQUIRY INTO THE POLITICAL GOOD. By Bertrand de Jouvenel. University of Chicago Press. $4.50.

At regular intervals reviewers in the "serious" press celebrate the appearance of a new work on politics by announcing that the familiar plaint that political philosophy is dead must now be abandoned, for here at long last is a work which shirks none of the traditional issues, which challenges the accepted categories of political thinking, which raises new problems while solving old ones, and which (for these and other reasons) can proudly take its place in the great tradition of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Burke, Tocqueville, T. H. Green . . . . Books of which such things are said would seem to possess three general characteristics. In the first place, they are long, or at any rate not short; secondly, they are "literary" rather than academic or scientific; and thirdly, they are conservative, in contrast to being radical (though it is sometimes felt to be in rather dubious taste to point out the contrast).

M. de Jouvenel's latest work, *Sovereignty,* possesses all these three characteristics in full measure. It is almost as long as M. Raymond Aron's *Opium des Intellectuels;* it is quite as "literary" as M. Albert Camus's *L'Homme Révolté,* and it would make not merely these writers but also Professors Talmon and von Hayek look by contrast brilliant pinks. It is not therefore surprising that it should have received its full share of the new treatment. An anonymous reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* (though recognizable on stylistic grounds as Mr. T. E. Utley, a Conservative theorist and journalist) has, for instance, described it as "a remarkable achievement," a "book . . . likely to affect permanently the categories of political thought," "a great work in political philosophy, a work which with all the restraint proper to scholarly comparison must be firmly placed in the ranks of the masters." Confronted by such claims, no one of any intellectual curiosity can remain for long indifferent to the question of their substance. Is Jouvenel's book a great work of political philosophy; or is it not?

At the outset a serious difficulty besets the reviewer—or this reviewer at least; others, it is true, have evaded it with amazing insouciance. This is the fact that the book is really remarkably hard to read and hard to understand. In part the trouble is stylistic, for Bertrand de Jouvenel would appear to be the victim of a radical indecision about literary aim. At times he seems to move in the direction of fine and

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expressive writing and to aim in the romantic manner at a sonorous style decorated and enriched by bold and pregnant tropes; at other times, he stretches out a hand to the Age of Reason and tries to simplify and classicize his prose so that everything shall be cool, precise, and elegant. In neither vein does he achieve success, but each has its own peculiar contribution to make to the unreadability of the whole: from the romantic manner come a sequence of over-ambitious images (The Bridge of Arcola and the Oak at Vincennes, the state as "the great Sergeant-Major") and a heavy monotony of rhythm; from the classical manner come a few evasive epigrams ("The man of the project is a lover") and some lengthy similes drawn from the mathematical sciences which lack any clear and systematic interpretation.

Again, Jouvenel's manner of exposition serves him no better than his style. Evident in many small ways, this unclarity of intention infects even the general theme of the book. For at the outset the author distinguishes two questions that in his view have been the main concern of traditional European political philosophy—the question, who are the rightful rulers in the community and the question, what ought they to do. He then goes on to say that for certain historical and theoretical reasons the first question has received excessive attention in the corpus of European thinking, and that it is his aim to restore the balance by concentrating on "What?" to the exclusion of "Who?" Yet if one then looks at the pages that follow, a third to a half of them are devoted to matters that fall naturally, indeed incontrovertibly, on the "Who?" side—topics like sovereignty, and the various kinds of authority, and the classification of value. All that can be urged in the author's favor on this score—though this scarcely is what he can have meant—is that everything he has to say about these topics is quite worthless, consisting as it does on the one hand of a very pretentious sociology of kingship, and on the other hand of a retelling of the well-known history of sovereignty, and that if the book contains anything that is both true and original, this must be elsewhere.

Let us then take Jouvenel's characterization of his own book seriously and see it as an investigation into the proper aim and intentions of rulers or, as the subtitle has it, an "inquiry into the political good." Now it might be objected straightaway that such an inquiry, so far from making a pleasant and agreeable change from the usual preoccupations of political philosophy, makes no sense whatsoever in modern conditions. For we live, for better or for worse, in a democratic age when the aims and intentions of government are determined by the wishes of the people, and accordingly any abstract ideas about the political good can be of no practical relevance whatsoever—unless of

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course they are directly addressed to the people themselves. Jouvenel declares himself aware of this objection and answers it (I think) by saying that this is precisely what he is doing. He is the modern Machiavelli whispering practical wisdom into the ear of his Prince, only his Prince happens to be the people. If this is how he really sees himself, this gives a fair idea of his sense of political reality.

Having to his satisfaction established the legitimacy of his inquiry (Introduction), the author goes on (Part II) to counter certain doctrines which would limit its scope or interest. In the first place, it is not true that the common good is self-evident—a view associated by the author exclusively with Jacobinism. On the contrary, perfectly honorable and patriotic men can disagree about it in good faith, so there is room here for serious discussion and the intervention of "the philosopher." Secondly, it is not true that the common good is subjective—a view associated by the author exclusively with Nominalism. For it is surely undeniable that when two people discuss, say, the welfare of France and disagree, they are in one clear sense discussing and disagreeing about the same thing. Thirdly, it is not true that the common good consists in the sum of particular goods. For particular goods conflict and it cannot be the role of public authority to settle these disputes by reference either to the individual's conception of his particular good (for this would lead to anarchy) or by reference to the authority's own conception of it (for this would lead to tyranny).

At this stage, Jouvenel's own argument takes wing. If the common good is not a function of private goods, then it must be connected with the community itself and its properties, more specifically with its cohesiveness and its ability to survive. As "a working hypothesis," he adopts the idea that the common good consists in "the social state itself and its successive advances"; and this he goes on in a later chapter to expand by reference to "social friendship" and "mutual trustfulness." To many this will seem familiar argument, leading on naturally to a defense of the integrated society and its warm tight-knit sense of community. But such is not Jouvenel's way. At the last moment he pulls back. He resists the blandishments of the tribal society; he rejects the "corollaries" (as he calls them) of his view of the common good, i.e., that society should be small, that it should be homogeneous in population and culture, and that it should be immutable; and he declares that his only aim is to urge upon "the open society" of modern life methods for obtaining trust and friendship which are parallel to, though different from, those appropriate to "the closed society" of prehistory and antiquity. Different they must be, for whereas a closed society has an end,

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the distinctive feature of the open society is that in it different members pursue different ends.

At this point it might be thought that in his flight Jouvenel has wheeled full circle and that he is after all prepared to accept the view that the social good is a construct out of personal goods. To which all that can be said is that he isn't. Exactly why Jouvenel rejects the central doctrine of classical liberalism is unclear, for his argumentation on this score is compressed to the point of unintelligibility. What is significant though—and here he is typical of contemporary anti-liberal thinking—is that having rejected a "reductionist" account of the common good, he does not then go on to embrace a rigorous theory like that of Natural Law, but on the contrary strikes out against any fixed abstract conception of justice. Indeed he even produces what he calls a proof that there cannot be a just social order. (The word "proof" here is a misnomer, for in fact the argument consists of various independent propositions.)

Justice according to Jouvenel is a matter of distribution. We distribute commodities justly or we distribute them unjustly. In order to effect a distribution we must first arrange the potential recipients in a serial order and we then distribute to each according to his position in the series. The distribution is just if the serial order in accordance with which we distribute is the relevant one; if it is not the relevant one, the distribution is unjust. So (to quote Jouvenel's own example) suppose I establish a fund to enable young people to visit the picture galleries of Italy. If I then lay it down that this prize money is to be distributed amongst applicants according to the blondness of their hair, I shall be said to have acted unjustly—for in such matters the color of hair is surely irrelevant. If however the money is to be distributed according to the artistic ability of the candidates or according to the likelihood of their benefiting from the journey, the distribution will be called fair—for the distribution will then be made in accordance with a relevant serial order. So the "notion of relevance is fundamental to all problems of justice."

Against this background of justice as the correct rule of distribution, Jouvenel's three propositions can now be stated. First, there can nearly always be some reasonable doubt whether any occasion is a correct occasion for any sort of distribution. For most commodities can be seen under two aspects: on the one hand, as *fruits,* as results of the productive process, and therefore ripe for distribution, on the other hand as *assets,* as agents in the productive process, and therefore requiring conservation. In deciding whether to distribute or not, we have to decide

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which aspect is the more important. Secondly, even when we do decide to distribute, there can always be reasonable doubt about what is the relevant serial order in accordance with which we should effect the distribution. Finally even if no single distribution is unjust, it is impossible to establish an entirely just condition of society, for that would involve making a complete distribution; and a complete distribution is in principle impossible for commodities are produced in time and at no moment are all present and available to the scrutiny of the human intelligence. "No proposition," Jouvenel writes, "is likelier to scandalize our contemporaries than this one."

Those who understand Jouvenel's arguments about justice in the same way as I do (and I am sure that there are other ways of doing so) may well pass straight on to his discussion of liberty in the expectation of finding there a more effective criticism of current radical thought. He takes as his starting point the classical liberal conception according to which to say that a man is free is an elliptical way of saying that he is free from certain obstacles to do certain actions. He goes on to show how this conception has at different periods been subject to different interpretations. Originally the obstacles were thought of in purely human terms; then they came to include natural obstacles; and finally a negative lack of resources was seen as being on a par with a positive obstacle. In this history many might see the fecundity of the liberal tradition, but to Jouvenel it is its condemnation. What, however, he really dislikes about the liberal view is not its elasticity but its inherent subjectivity (though he nowhere uses this word). For he appears to be of the opinion that it is ridiculous to talk of one's being free or unfree to do something unless one wants to do it, and equally ridiculous to talk of obstacles being or not being in one's way, unless one is aware of them. And of course if one is of this opinion, then the classical conception of liberty becomes to some extent or other subjective, subsiding into some notion like the maximization of satisfactions. Terrified by this ghost that he has conjured up, Jouvenel again takes flight from liberalism and seeks refuge in a conception of liberty as moral dignity. On this view man is free if and only if he is "the voluntary executive of his own moral judgment." But such a view is absurd: for surely not even in the austerest periods of history has it been thought that man was free if he could do everything that he ought to do and yet nothing that he merely wanted to do. And not only is the view absurd in itself, it most certainly fails to achieve the elimination of subjectivity. For as the author himself so disarmingly admits, those with one set of moral beliefs are likely to judge as free a system of laws which to others

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with differing beliefs may seem odiously tyrannical. Moreover (though Jouvenel does not see this point) the element of subjectivity is endemic to his conception of liberty, relating liberty (as it does) to the changing moral conscience, whereas it is inherent in the liberal conception only (as we have seen) when this conception is interpreted in a particular way. Nor does our author ever trouble to raise the question whether the note of subjectivity in a conception of liberty is or is not a defect. If he had done so, he might have realized that there is all the difference between a view that makes liberty subjective in the sense that our judgments whether X is free depend for their truth in part on X's sentiments and opinions, and a view that would make liberty subjective in the sense that our judgments whether X is free depend for their truth in part on our moral beliefs. The former is surely true, the second false. Jouvenel rejects the first in favor of the second.

In the last chapter of his book, Jouvenel turns his attention to the principle of toleration or liberty of opinion, which is, he says, more than democracy "the basic principle of the political institutions of the West." All of us or nearly all of us embrace this principle. But why? What is its authorization? To find an answer to this question according to Jouvenel is an urgent task, because to do so is "to arrive at certain fundamental axioms of our political reasoning which it is important to bring to the light of day." His own answer is that the authorization or foundation of toleration is a belief in "natural light" or "Postulate of Convergence," i.e., the postulate that men's opinions "gravitate naturally towards truth and justice." This postulate in turn is connected with the belief that human mind or nature participates in the Divine essence. "When that is no more believed, the whole edifice [i.e. of liberal democracy] collapses."

This answer is a familiar one by now, but since it is received very favorably in certain quarters, it may be worth while considering it even in the rather elusive form given to it by our author. In the first place, much of it hinges on an ambiguity in the notion of authorization or foundation. For to say that a postulate A is the foundation of a principle P might be to say that from A, P follows, so that if A is true then P also is true; alternatively it might be to say that from P, A follows, so that if P is true then A also is true. Now it should be obvious that if A is a foundation of P in the first sense, A can be false and P true. However if A is the foundation of P in the second sense, if A is false P is false. Jouvenel appears to ignore this. For he argues directly from the fact that the Postulate of Convergence is a foundation for toleration to the conclusion that toleration cannot be believed in by those who reject the postulate. The error is, alas, not uncommon today.

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It must be pointed out that Jouvenel endeavors to supplement his formal argument by other considerations. For if people are more likely to choose error than truth, why expose them to error? But to this argument there are in existence counterarguments of whose existence Jouvenel seems unaware. In the first place, there are arguments that refer to the intrinsic value of human endeavor and experiment; it is, I know, fashionable to deride these arguments nowadays, and, as Tocqueville saw years ago, those who do not love liberty cannot be brought to see its value. Secondly, there is the argument that grounds itself on the awkward question: if all men are highly fallible *and* error is to be eliminated, who is to effect the elimination?

But at this stage a suspicion may well stir in the reader's mind that he has been engaged by Jouvenel in a mere shadow argument. For it is hard to resist the impression that the Postulate of Convergence, so far from being a great article of faith enshrined in, though sometimes filched from, the temple of Western Christendom, is a mere truism. For surely if men are allowed free access to all opinions, have all relevant evidence open to them, are not subjected to prejudicial or superstitious influences, are given enough time to consider and reconsider their opinion, then it follows *of necessity* that they will arrive at the truth. If, however, as I have suggested, the Postulate of Convergence is a truism, then one of the book's chief aims is neutralized: for its acceptance could not involve, as our author would wish, the acceptance along with it of a vast and plausible religious orthodoxy.

Bertrand de Jouvenel's book belongs to a class of literature, peculiarly a feature of democratic ages, in which politics, art, science, whatever may be the great concern of the day, is surveyed from a point of view rather self-consciously above, and also somewhat further back than, that generally adopted. By this means certain writers secure for themselves in their own day a reputation for detachment, irony, wisdom. It is notable however that their reputations seldom survive. The isolation they impose upon themselves is enough to prevent them from having any serious influence or effect upon the products of their age; while their restless, mocking interest in what goes on around or rather below them deflects them from the path of serious theoretical development. Indeed the role and function of this type of literature seems ultimately not to go beyond that of providing the cynics of the age with a store of worldly opinions far beyond their own intellectual station. Generically this is known as the literature of the *salon*.

Richard Wollheim

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VARIETY

GEORGE SANTAYANA ON EXISTENTIALISM: An Unpublished Letter

This letter, printed below for the first time, was occasioned by a singularly distraught and twentieth-century letter which I addressed to Santayana on February 4, 1948. My letter was prompted by my having just previously completed the reading of most of his published work as well as having just submitted a dissertation on Kierkegaard to the Department of Philosophy at the University of Chicago. No two thinkers that one can recall offhand are more dissimilar than Kierkegaard and Santayana. I was enormously curious to know what Santayana's reactions were to Kierkegaard, the Chrisitan existentialists, and the general existential emphasis on subjective cognition. The letter, published with the permission of Santayana's executor, Mr. Daniel Cory, was his reply.

ARTHUR A. COHEN

Via Santo Stefano Rotondo 6,
Rome, February 9, 1948

Dear Mr. Cohen: Your letter about Kierkegaard raised in my mind more questions than it answered. Does existentialism assume that we are all Christians? Is *Angst* about "Salvation" that of the Jews at the time of Christ or

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that of later Christians of avoiding hell fire after death? Is not such *Angst* a disease, an emotion produced by Protestant theology after faith in that theology has disappeared? And what is this self that feels the *Angst* and leaps heroically for salvation into the Unknown? If it were the transcendental Self, or Brahman, it could feel no anxiety because it can be only transcendental, on *this* side of the footlights; it may have interrupted experiences, but it cannot die in the sense of not being capable of having more; and more of them can hurt it if it is purely transcendental, like the comfortable rich man in the stalls watching a tragedy and then a comedy. If, on the contrary, this self is the concrete human psyche or person we know perfectly what its circumstances are and what it needs to be anxious about. There may be wise or foolish decisions made by it, but no leap into the unknown. The whole thing, from this point of view, seems confused and gratuitous.

There is another approach to Existentialism, from Husserl, that interests me more. Husserl, in the earlier form of his Pure Phenomenology, came upon what I call essences; and the counterpart of these, considered as given phenomena (which they need not be) would be the pure transcendental spirit, or Brahman, mentioned above, which is all that I can get satisfactorily out of Kant. But Hus-

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serl afterwards reverted to Kant, and confused (as I think) the spirit with the animal psyche, which might be anxious, precisely because it is not transcendental spirit, but the life of an animal that can fall into all sorts of traps and suffer all sorts of collapses.

Besides Husserl I have read more or less of Heidegger, and liked his analysis of "pure" ideas, such as Nothing or Death. He sees perfectly that the intrinsic vacancy of these notions lends them the function of repeating or framing-in positive objects, as death, by terminating a life, makes a biographical unit and moral finality of it. This seems to me much more enlightening than leaps or shipwrecks of the Soul in the Infinite Unknown.

Could one say, in the spirit of Kierkegaard, that the total Object confronting a life or personal existence was Circumstances? And would God be a religious name for this? If so, I could see the inevitableness, for our animal psyche, to fear, love, and grope for God. And in so far as the Kingdom of Heaven (i.e. the Reign of God) is just this Object in the measure in which its operation affects us, I can see how the Existentialist revives the Christian problem of salvation. But why revive the problem without reviving the concrete beliefs that would explain and solve it?

I am about to read a new Italian account of Existentialism by Prof. Castelli, who is a serene Catholic and man of the world, who may make things clearer to me.

Yours sincerely,
G. Santayana

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